



GRACE CITY CHURCH
WILMINGTON

GC KIDS MINISTRY POLICY HANDBOOK



Dear Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Grace City Church Wilmington!

As a church, 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 their knowledge of God, respond in faith in Jesus Christ, and grow in Christian maturity.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of our local church.

The following procedures found in this handbook have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

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

Sincerely,

GCC Leadership

Grace City Church Policies & Procedures for Children’s Ministries

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Overview of the Grace City Church Safety System

Grace City Church desires to protect each child involved in our ministry. As a result we require 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.

STEP ONE: Screening Process

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

1. Complete the Volunteer Application (employees and volunteers)
2. Provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
3. Complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)

*As a general rule, a volunteer must be a member of Grace City Church before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children or students.

STEP TWO: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

To equip Grace City Church volunteers and staff with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and behavior, Grace City Church requires that all staff members and volunteers become certified with MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training. Upon review of the training material, a test is taken and certificate awarded for passing scores. Only those who are certified may go on to serve with children.

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.

STEP THREE: Criminal Background Check

Grace City Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check.

STEP FOUR: 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.

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Child Safety Policy

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Grace City Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Grace City Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Pastoral Team.

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Grace City Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse**. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to act in the best interest of all children in every ministry classroom, program, and activity.

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 and a pastor as soon as possible. In incidents of suspected abuse, the appropriate civil authority will be contacted.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Grace City Church 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 Grace City Church Leadership and the 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 Grace City Church Leadership. 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. Staff members and volunteers are asked to immediately report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor and a pastor.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, Grace City Church 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 and a 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 Children's Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

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

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children or students at Grace City Church.

Any known sex offender or child abuser is completely prohibited from entering the children's ministry wing at any time.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Volunteers and staff at Grace City Church **are required** to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to their immediate supervisor and a pastor.

If appropriate, they will inform the New Hanover County Department of Social Services (1-910-798-3400), and local police.

A volunteer or staff member **may** allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to civil authorities. **In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from directly reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate criminal authorities.**

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to their immediate supervisor and a pastor as soon as possible after the incident.

Children's Ministries Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interactions with children.

- 1. The Director of Children's Ministry** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly.
- 2. The Director of Children's Ministry** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations of volunteers/staff with adherence to the policy handbook and risk management.
- 3. An additional Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Children's Ministry program at least once each quarter.
- 4. The Director of Children's Ministry** meets with the Associate Pastor at least once per quarter and with the deacons once per year to discuss Children's Ministry.
- 6. The Pastoral team** meets with the Director of Children's Ministry once each year to discuss Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Safety & Security Team is responsible for ensuring that the Children's portion of the building is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers, and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended on the premises during children's ministry programming or classes. GC Kids staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. 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 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.)

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

WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

Grace City Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all GC Kids programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child minimum ratios will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	15
Preschool, 2 through 5 years old	2	20
Elementary age	2	40

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

DISCIPLINE

It is Grace City Church's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children in Grace City Church contexts. **No form of physical discipline by volunteers or staff is acceptable during Grace City Church children's activities.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary.
- 2) If behavior continues after multiple attempts to verbally redirect, his or her parents will be paged.
- 3) Once parent(s) arrive, parents will be updated on the situation and asked to provide help.
- 4) If the parent is confident that their child is ready to return to class and ready to follow the rules, the child may return.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery/Preschool

Diaper changing and bathroom breaks for children ages 0-5 require the parent's assistance. The parents of the child will be texted at the GC Kids Check-in station.

No staff member or volunteer may change a diaper. No staff member or volunteer may be in a bathroom with kids under their direct supervision.

Specific bathrooms will be designated for kids use only to help ensure a safe and secure environment.

Elementary

Children ages 6-12 may be accompanied to the bathroom for supervision when needed. However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance based upon individual capabilities. No fewer than two volunteers are needed to facilitate a bathroom break.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the bathroom to check on an individual child, he or she must be accompanied by another volunteer. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

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 Grace City Church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

MEDICATION

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer with a doctor's prescription. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers in Grace City Church's GC Kids Ministry 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 a Pastor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

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

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:

1. Children 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 child in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Grace City Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Grace City Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Grace City Church owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Grace City Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a significant behavioral problem while participating in GC Kids Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Grace City Church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved.

Parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with the children's programs at Grace City Church will be required to complete the Grace City Church volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

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

1. 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.

2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported in accordance with the *Reporting Abuse or Suspicion of Abuse* section on page 6 of this document.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, 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 in the presence of other children or staff members and volunteers.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in GC Kids Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force even approved physical contact, touch or affection on a child.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and 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 in the program.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers in GC Kids Ministry at Grace City Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (phones, magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

TOBACCO USE

Grace City Church 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 Grace City Church activities or programs.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Grace City Church 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.

SUPERVISION

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Grace City Church 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.

Staff members and volunteers in GC Kids Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children only into the custody of the adult/guardian with the alpha-numeric pick-up slip.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child (e.g. the adult does not have a pick-up slip), they should immediately locate or contact a supervisor, the head of security, or the GC Kids Ministry Director before releasing the child.

Once the child is released from GC Kids Ministry back to their parent or guardian, Grace City Church is no longer responsible for their safety.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Grace City Church's GC Kids Ministry Policy Handbook and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Grace City Church.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Grace City Church. I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed.

I have reviewed the duties required of me, and I agree to fulfill them. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Grace City Church at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____