



Community Covenant Church
Children's Ministries Handbook
Policies & Procedures

5 He decreed statutes for Jacob
and established the law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach their children,
6 so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.
7 Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his commands.

Psalm 78



Our Mission is to bring Christ's Hope, Healing, and Wholeness
to our community and to our world.

VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

Welcome to Children's Ministries! It is our desire to encompass the Community Covenant Church mission by bringing Christ's Hope, Healing, and Wholeness to our children and their families in all our ministries. We want children of all backgrounds, experiences, and abilities:

- To receive unconditional love as a beloved child of God
- To experience our church community as a place where they belong and are valued
- To discover the truths in God's word and learn how to it apply in their lives
- To become fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ

From birth to 5th grade, we want to engage each child at their development level to experience and learn about Christ in a creative, fun, and safe environment. Recognizing that parents have the greatest influence on their children, we want to come alongside parents to offer encouragement and resources to help their children to grow in their knowledge and devotion to Jesus Christ. We desire to help families by:

- Creatively teaching God's Word to kids through story, music, art, video, games, small group discussions, age-appropriate and other activities
- Equipping parents with tools and resources that will set them up to be the primary spiritual influencers in their homes.
- Maintaining a safe and secure environment for kids and families where all volunteers and leaders are carefully screened and monitored through a stringent security process.

At Community Covenant Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. 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 Community Covenant Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

Sincerely,

Children's Ministries Team

VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURE

In order to ensure the safety of our children and that of the workers involved in Children's Ministries, all volunteers are required to participate in a screening process. It is of the utmost importance that we provide a safe and secure environment for our children to learn about Jesus. It is our hope that you will not be intimidated by this procedure, but that you would understand the importance of this policy for the sake of all those involved with the children of Community Covenant Church.

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, Covenant Community Church requires every new worker in Children's Ministries is to complete the following screening process before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

- A Child/Youth Volunteer Application which includes at least two references.
- A background check through CheckR (if 18 or older). The background check will be renewed every two years.
- Sexual Abuse Awareness Online Training (if 18 or older). The training will be renewed every two years.
- Interview (Depending on position applied for, you may be contacted for an interview and briefing on volunteer leader expectations as well as child safety policies and procedures.)
- Given a Children's Ministries Handbook

Applications, reference checks, and background checks will be confidential documents kept in a secured file in the church office.

CLASSROOM STAFFING GUIDELINES

The Children's Ministry team has developed a set of guidelines for all volunteers to follow. Our guidelines are designed not only to promote spiritual growth in our children, but to provide protection for them as well. It is essential for us to provide a safe and nurturing environment. Everyone who cares for the children at Community Covenant Church must follow these policies and procedures.

The Children's Ministry Staff must approve all volunteers who engage in supervision of children under the sponsorship of Community Covenant Church. This process involves each volunteer completing the entire Children's Ministry Application process before they are eligible to serve with any children.

- At least one screened adult (18 yrs. or older) must be in the classroom at all times.
- Regardless of the number of children present, there is to be a minimum of two volunteer leaders in the classroom at all times. This is for the protection of the worker.

Community Covenant Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

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

If a classroom consistently exceeds the recommended limit of attendees, steps will be taken to reduce the impact of group size. This may include adding staff, breaking into small groups in separate areas, shifting age levels, or adding an additional class.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Children's Ministries Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the Children's 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 in the Children's Building or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministry 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 children's programming event, Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the 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.

FOR SAFETY SAKE

When serving in ministry to children and families, always be polite, helpful and full of grace. You never know who might come through our doors.

Every person who volunteers in Children's Ministry at Community Covenant Church is a "leader" in the eyes of kids and families. Therefore, a leader is called to live a life pursuing the qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. A leader is not expected to live a perfect life, (only Jesus pulled that off) however, a leader is held to a higher standard because in children's ministry leaders are entrusted to help kids and families to know and grow in God's Story and take their next step towards Jesus Christ...together.

GENERAL STANDARDS, EXPECTATION, & SAFETY

- Be On Time—be in classroom ready to engage children at least 15-20 minutes before the start of each service. The children still show up even if you are running late.
- Stay till the End—Plan to stay until the next hour teachers are in place or until the last child has been picked up.
- Always help clean up and reset the classroom before leaving. Put back resources and equipment. Wipe down and disinfect all countertop and table surfaces.
- Kids and volunteers must wear their nametags at all times. Please, stop people from entering rooms who don't have a lanyard or a number to pick up a child.
- If a parent needs to be called to a room, let Children's Ministry Coordinator know.
- First Aid kits are located in the classrooms and in the kitchen. Each room should have a few band aids and other first aid supplies as well.
- Follow the emergency exit procedure posted in rooms.
- In case of emergency, dial 911.

REGISTRATION CHECK IN AND PICK-UP

- We utilize a secure check-in system with matching tags for parents and children ages 3-11.
- Help parents understand and know that our procedures are for their child's safety.
- After printing tags and placing tag on child(ren), child(ren) will stay with parents until released in service to attend Kids on the Rock. Parents will be asked to match their tag with their child's before leaving after service. Parents must have a matching tag when picking up their child.
- If a child cries constantly for more than 5 minutes or so after their parent/guardian leaves, is ill, has extreme difficulty following classroom routines, or has a toileting accident, the parent/guardian may be asked to come to the classroom.
- In Awana or VBS, if a parent is picking up another family's child, they must be on the list of approved people to pickup that child.
- Siblings cannot pick up a child.

TWO-PERSON RULE

- Two-Person Rule: volunteers are never allowed to be alone with a child. This applies to children in your own family while serving in Kids on the Rock or Awana.
- The “Two-Person” Rule is designed to protect both children and adults by not giving opportunities for adults to have sustained time alone with a child or student. It also protects staff and volunteers in situations in which a child or student with some significant emotional needs may misinterpret adult interaction or may make false statements about an adult’s behavior toward them. By following this rule, many potential problem situations are prevented.
- Never go behind closed doors or into a restroom with a child without another adult present. One adult can stand in the doorway creating a balance for integrity and being respectful to the child.
- This will require an intentional focus for married couples or family members to hold one another accountable to the highest standards for integrity and trust. Even when you volunteer with someone you trust [spouse, parent, sibling, etc.], the two-person rule is non-negotiable. If volunteers are related, the presence of a 3rd volunteer is preferred.
- Teen volunteers can serve with kids in the presence of a screened adult.

BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

- Build relationship with students and parents. Give them reports often about their children, both good and bad. Behaviors are a sign of what is going on in the heart. One of our goals is heart transformation.
- Always be encouraging even when you must ask a child to stop a negative behavior. Allow the Children’s Ministries Coordinator, Awana leader, or Children’s Ministries Director to handle any hard discipline issues. They must always be informed of discipline issues.
- Never shout at a child or raise your voice. Always be firm but gentle. You may give a child a choice. “You can stop that behavior or we can talk to your parents when they come to pick you up.” Then follow through on that statement.
- Never shout “shut up,” curse, or yell in an effort to gain the attention of a group. Use the number system 1-2-3-4-5 or wait quietly for everyone’s attention and then begin.
- If a child needs help sitting still, the volunteer leader should move next to the child. Maybe even touch them on the shoulder to get their attention. If they persist, remove them from the group and sit with them in the back. They have a choice to make: Behave appropriately or the parent will be told at the end of the class. In some cases we may need to call the parent to the room. Please, don’t use this as an idol threat. Always follow through.
- Remember, never use sarcasm with a child or ridicule them in any way. Any discipline should take place in the presence of another adult.
- Never use any kind of physical discipline or any action that could be misinterpreted to be physical punishment.
- Under no circumstances will spanking, neck or choke holds, ear or hair pulling, or any other corporal punishment be used.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Community Covenant Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Community Covenant Church has implemented a ‘physical contact policy’ that promotes a

positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Children's Ministry 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 the Children's Ministries Director or member of the pastoral staff.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Children's Ministry 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 even give the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministry 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.
- 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 must be reported immediately to the Children's Ministries Director or member of the pastoral staff.

BATHROOM POLICY

Because younger children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Nursery Children

- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.

Preschool Age Children

- Diapering will be a parent responsibility.
- The preschool classroom bathroom or the welcome area or gym area bathroom will be used.
- A volunteer will accompany the child to the welcome area or gym area - if the child is able to use the toilet independently, the assistant will wait in the welcome area or gym area.
- If the child needs assistance with toileting, a volunteer will assist and leave the main bathroom door propped open.
- The volunteer will try to teach children to help themselves by using the hand-over-hand method. In this technique, the assistant places their hands over the child's hands in

helping with fastening clothes, and wiping skin. There will be staff rotation so that the same person is not taking children to the bathroom all the time.

- In the event of soiled clothing, a volunteer will contact the parent.

School Age Children

Younger school age children may be accompanied by a volunteer child to the welcome area or gym area and will wait outside the restroom for the child. If help is needed, the parent must be located. Older children may go to bathroom independently.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Prior to the beginning of each Fall session, training will be available for all volunteers. This training will include a review of policies and procedures.

If there are opportunities for interested volunteers to participate in workshops and conferences in the local area, the Children's Ministry program will strive to share a portion of the cost if possible.

Child Safety Policy

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

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to the Children's Ministry Director or member of the pastoral staff.

Community Covenant Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors, 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 another appropriate agency.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Community Covenant Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all 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 lead pastor and the leadership team.

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 Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at Community Covenant Church.

Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at Community Covenant Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Alaska state statutes and municipality of Anchorage codes require that staff members and volunteers at Community Covenant Church report all incidents of suspected or actual abuse and/or neglect of children regardless of whether or not the incident occurs in or is related to the facility. This facility is therefore obligated by law to report such incidents within 24 hours to the Office of Children's Services at 1-800-478-4444.

WHAT ARE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

If you have a reasonable suspicion*, even if you are not sure about the existence of abuse or neglect, you are obligated to report. It is not your responsibility to determine whether your suspicions are correct or to investigate those suspicions. It is also not your responsibility to determine if the abuse or neglect occurred in the child's home or the church facility.

There may be times when you wonder whether something constitutes abuse or neglect, or if your suspicions are adequate to warrant reporting. Please contact the Office of Children's Services nearest you for more information.

State law defines child abuse or neglect to include the following actions by those responsible for the child's welfare:

- **Physical injury** that harms or threatens a child's health or welfare.
- **Failure to care for a child** including neglect of the necessary physical (food, shelter, clothing, and medical attention), emotional, mental and social needs.
- **Sexual abuse**, including molestations or incest.
- **Sexual exploitation**, including permitting or encouraging prostitution.
- **Mental injury**, an injury to the emotional well-being or intellectual or psychological capacity of a child, as evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in the child's ability to function in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- **Maltreatment**, a child has suffered substantial harm as a result of child abuse or neglect due to an act or omission not necessarily committed by the child's parent, custodian or guardian.

*"Reasonable suspicion" means cause, based on all the facts and circumstances known to the person that would lead a reasonable person to believe that something might be the case.

Taken from Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Alaska

PROMOTION PROCEDURE

Nursery

- **Infant Nursery**
The infant nursery will care for babies until they begin to actively crawl.
- **Crawlers/Walkers**
The crawler/early walkers nursery will care for children up to the age of three. When a child reaches the age of three years, they are eligible to transition to the three-four year old class.

Preschool and Elementary Transitional Timing

- **Room 120: 3-4 Year Olds**
The three-four years old class will accept children the Sunday following their third birthday.
- **Room 119: 5-6 Year Olds**
Children are eligible for the five-six years old class the Sunday following their fifth birthday.
- **Room 128-129: 7-8 Year Olds**
Children are eligible for the seven-eight year old class the Sunday following their seventh birthday.
- **Youth Room: 9-11 Year Olds**
Children are eligible for the nine to eleven-year-old class the Sunday following their ninth birthday.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

It is our 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, biting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. (“Jamie, you didn’t stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.”) In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child in time-out.
- Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a “spot” to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child’s life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. (“Jamie, you’re doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.”)
- Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

DISCIPLINE SUGGESTIONS

- Speak quietly, yet directly to the child, using silence, if necessary to get the child's attention.
- Never belittle a child; rather, express disappointment over the child's negative behavior.
- Don't forget to look beyond the behavior to the root cause.
- Always remain calm and in control. Your conduct speaks volumes when you are under pressure. Firmness, not anger, should be communicated.
- Establish and communicate expectations and rules of behavior early and often. Be proactive as opposed reactive.
- Provide opportunities for children to move and have fun. Children were not created to always sit still and be silent.

- Reward appropriate behavior. Rewards can be in the form of verbal praise, small tangible prizes, and candy always works, too.
- Communicate with the parent early if a negative or inappropriate behavior becomes persistent. Speak with the parent in a positive manner, asking for their suggestions and opinions in an effort to help their child enjoy Community Kids and ultimately grow closer in their relationship to Jesus.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Children's Ministry Coordinator or the Children's Ministries Director.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events may include occasional off-site activities. The following procedures will be observed throughout such events:

- Permission signatures will be required for all off-site activities in which church volunteers other than participants' parents/guardians provide transportation from the church to the activity site and for any overnight activities.
- All transportation will be done by adult drivers over the age of 21. Copies of a current valid driver's license and verification of insurance for each driver will be maintained in the church office.
- All occupants of each vehicle will wear seat belts, unless a bus is utilized.
- A minimum of two individuals will supervise each group of children in an area.
- Appropriate adult/child ratios will be maintained during all such activities. Recommended staffing is: a ratio of 1:5 (1 adult to every 5 children) for preschool up through Kindergarten groups; and a ratio of 1:10 for elementary school groups, first through sixth grade.
- During any overnight activities, both male and female supervisors will be available.
- Separate sleeping quarters will be maintained for males and females during any overnight activities.

FIRST AID POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- A First Aid Kit and gloves are kept in each classroom and in the kitchen.
- Please notify the Community Covenant Church Staff of any First-Aid supplies that need to be replaced.
- Wash your hands.
- Avoid direct contact with blood, vomit, or excrement.
- Report all incidents and minor injuries to the parents as soon as possible after class by filling out and “Ouch Report”. (See “Ouch” report form attached.)
- In the event of a serious emergency, please call the Community Covenant Staff, the parents from the service, and 911. A volunteer will be assigned outside to wait for the ambulance to direct the paramedics to the child. Another designated adult will locate and communicate with the parents.

INJURIES/ACCIDENTS

Any time a child sustains a significant injury, verbal and written reports will be completed:

- A classroom volunteer will complete a parent “Ouch” form detailing the injury. (See “Ouch” report form attached.)
- The sheet will be shown to the parent along with a verbal explanation and the parent must sign the form.
- The volunteer will give a copy of the “Ouch” form to the Children’s Ministries Director that same day.

A first aid reference and kit are located in the church kitchen. Each classroom will have band aids and antiseptic towelettes available. In the event of an emergency, the parent will be notified as soon as possible.

MEDICATION

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Children’s Ministry (except in special where authorization has been provided in writing by parent and approved by Children’s Ministry or Preschool Director.)

ILLNESS

Children, staff, or volunteers who have symptoms of infectious illnesses (examples: fever over 100 degrees F, heavy discharge from nose/eyes, deep chest congestion, diarrhea, vomiting, eye infection, rash, sore throat, indications of chicken pox, impetigo, lice, rabies, or strep throat, etc.) should not be present at any children ministries’ programs until symptoms have been absent for 24 hours.

For the health and well-being of your child and others, please keep your child home for at least 24 hours after the first dose of medication if they are diagnosed with an illness requiring antibiotics.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Community Covenant Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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 child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

- Acquaint yourself with the evacuation route for your classroom. It is posted near the exit door of your classroom.
- Acquaint yourself with the evacuation route for adjoining classrooms should your primary exit be blocked and you need to evacuate through an adjoining classroom.
- Before evacuating count the number of children in your class. If you have an attendance sheet with names, take it with you.
- Turn off classroom lights as you leave.
- Evacuate to the area designated on your evacuation route chart. Upon arrival, take a head count to insure all your children are with you.
- Await further instructions from a member of Community Covenant Staff or emergency personnel.
- First Aid will be brought to you as needed. Do not leave your group to obtain First Aid.
- Remain calm and help keep your children calm. Keep them informed as you have information to share with them.
- In case of an emergency such as earthquake, etc. remove children to interior rooms away from windows. A supervisor will advise you on evacuation route.
- Release children only to their parents and only after you have been given the okay to dismiss by a member of the Community Covenant staff. Early childhood parents must have their child's claim check. Do not dismiss any children, including elementary age, to go on their own.

OUCH REPORT



Date: _____

Time: _____

Dear: _____
(parent's name)

_____ cried "OUCH!"
(child's name)

This is what happened: _____

Room or place where it occurred: _____

Here's how we treated it: _____

_____ We feel your child is OK now. Room # _____

_____ Further medical attention is advised

Sincerely, _____ Date _____
(teacher's name)

The above Community Covenant Church representative has discussed with me how this "ouch" occurred.

Signature _____ Date _____
(parent or guardian)

If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Cristina Tharin, Children's Ministries Director at 907-696-5229.