

# West Side Christian Church

## K-5<sup>th</sup> Children's ministry

### Welcome

Jesus valued children. He shows us this is true when he reprimands his disciples for wrongly assuming that the children being brought for his touch were a nuisance to his ministry. In Luke 18: 15-16, we are told that Jesus didn't just tolerate them, but he actually encouraged the children to come to him, saying "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." At WSCC, we place a Christ-like value on our children, encouraging them to come to Jesus. We are excited that you have partnered with us as we try to connect kids to God's son.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of WSCC's children's programming along with the procedures and guidelines that have been established for the volunteers of our K-5<sup>th</sup> grade children's ministry. Please read through it carefully. After you have completely read it, sign the attached form and return it to your ministry coordinator. You can also mail it to the church office.

We hope this guide will answer most questions you may have about serving in this ministry. However, if after reading it you still have questions, we encourage you to ask the ministry coordinator for your area of children's ministry and they will help you find answers. WSCC reserves the right to modify, supplement, rescind, or revise any of this policy, with or without notice, as necessary or appropriate, since no church can anticipate all possible situations that could arise in ministry or provide information that answers every possible question ahead of time.

Churches have long relied on volunteers to fulfill their calls to service—not because of reward or remuneration—but out of love and obedience in personal relationship to God. While WSCC's children's ministry hopes that your service is both long lasting and rewarding, we realize that neither the church nor the volunteer can always predict whether a specific role will be a good fit. Nothing in this handbook creates a contract of employment and, even though children's ministry workers are asked to make a commitment to serve the duration of a school year, either you or the church can terminate this relationship at any time. If you decide to terminate your involvement in children's ministry we request that you contact your ministry coordinator or department leader and, out of consideration, give them 30 days to find another volunteer to replace you.

Once again, we thank you for your partnership in ministry. We look forward to serving with you in the upcoming year.

## VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

As a children's ministry volunteer, we ask you to review and commit to this list of volunteer expectations:

- Volunteers are expected to take seriously their responsibility as a Christian role model to children and their families. Volunteers are ambassadors of Jesus Christ and of West Side Christian Church. Volunteers who live "above reproach" will encourage other believers and strengthen the church.
- Volunteers are expected to regularly attend Sunday morning adult worship services at West Side. (We define regular attendance as a minimum of 3/4 of the time.) It has always been our policy to encourage our members to attend worship one hour and serve one hour each week. Therefore, we will ask volunteers who habitually come to serve in our children's ministry one hour and then leave church without participating in adult worship to step down from their service. (Please complete the communication card during service so can remain accountable for our commitment to worship together each week.)
- Children's Ministry volunteers are recruited to serve a school calendar year, which is September-August, unless other arrangements have been made through a ministry coordinator. In May, volunteers should communicate their plans for the upcoming, new school year with their coordinator. If termination during the school year is anticipated, volunteers are asked to give 30 days notice of their resignation, if possible. This gives the coordinator time to find a qualified replacement.
- Volunteers are expected to attend department meetings and training opportunities that are directly related to WSCC's children's ministry. If attendance is not possible, volunteers are asked to call or email their coordinator.
- Volunteers are expected to arrive 15-20 minutes before class starts in order to make sure their classrooms are prepared for the children.
- Volunteers are expected to greet parents and children warmly.
- When a volunteer needs to be absent, they are expected to notify their ministry coordinator as soon as possible so that a replacement can be found. In the event of a last minute emergency or sickness, if their coordinator cannot be contacted directly, the church office should be informed so they can pass along the message.
- Volunteers are expected to communicate any difficulties, challenges, or disruptions in their classroom to the ministry leader within 24 hours of occurrence.
- Volunteers are expected to provide a safe environment for the children entrusted to them and exhibit a nurturing spirit.
- Because our ministry is constantly growing and seeks to reach new families, we ask that all volunteers help seek out and recruit new volunteers to help in their area and others areas of the children's ministry. Talk about your experience with them and encourage them to get involved. We also appreciate you passing on names to the Children's Ministry Director team so we can follow up with them about the leadership application process.
- Volunteers are expected to read through these guidelines, familiarize themselves with the content within, and sign the Volunteer Covenant (see attached copy).

# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

At West Side Christian Church, the primary goal of our Child Abuse Policy is to provide a safe, secure, and loving environment for our children, while helping parents feel comfortable entrusting our staff and volunteers with their child's well-being. Additionally, we will take precautions to protect church volunteers from false accusations or suspicions.

To reach these goals, WSCC herein establishes policies and procedures for volunteer screening, supervision of and interaction with minors, and child abuse/neglect reporting. WSCC will not tolerate any occurrence of abuse, and upon learning of such, will report violators to legal authorities. All who participate in church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from a ministry position.

# INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS

## 1. Worker Approval and Identification

- The first way to prevent child abuse is to require all children's workers to complete a volunteer application and background screening process before they are placed into a classroom. All workers must have a completed and approved application on file at the church office.
- People observed wandering around the children's areas must be reported to the ministry coordinator immediately.
- Workers will be provided with a church created name tag which identifies them as an approved children's ministry volunteer.

## 2. Restroom Procedures:

- Workers may never take a child to the restroom without another adult or other children present.
- Children in 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade may be sent in pairs to the restroom without the supervision of an adult. Teachers should monitor the situation closely. 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders may not escort other children to the restroom.
- Children should have as much privacy as possible in the restrooms. After checking the restrooms to ensure no one else is using it, teachers can stand outside the bathrooms in the hallway and wait for children. If the children get too loud, the teacher may stand at the entrance door and give directions as needed.

## 3. Classroom Procedures:

- At least two workers should be present in each classroom whenever possible. There are times when a large class of children is divided into small groups that are taught by one teacher. In that situation, if the door to the classroom does not have a glass window, the door to the adjoining classroom or hall must be propped open. No child should be left alone with only one worker.
- Window blinds are to be kept open at all times unless it is necessary to darken the room for proper showing of videos or projected audiovisual equipment.
- Workers may not have children sit on their lap while the room is darkened or when other workers are not present.
- If a worker needs to have a one-on-one conversation with a child, find a "safe" place to have it, such as a busy hallway or in a quieter area of the classroom with others present.

#### 4. **Appropriate Touch**

- Physical contact with children should be minimal and only while other adults are present. Touching to comfort or affirm a minor in an age-appropriate manner is permitted.
- Some examples of age-appropriate touch include: handshakes, “high-fives,” brief hugs, or a brief touch on the shoulder.
- Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous may, in some instances, may be necessary.

#### 5. **Dismissal from class**

- Parents, other pre-authorized adults or siblings in junior high and older are required to personally pick their children up from the K-5<sup>th</sup> grade with the appropriate receipt.
- When parents check in their child(ren) for The Wild they may also check them in for The Dive at 10:15 and/or 11:30AM. These children will appear on The Dive transfer list for each class and will be escorted by a designated leader to the children’s worship location. In the event that a child is not picked up within 10 minutes of the end of class and they are not on the transfer list, the child will be brought to the ‘Help Station’ where their parents will be contacted.

#### 6. **Approved Activities:**

- Activities or outings outside of regularly scheduled classes must be pre-approved by the church staff directly overseeing children’s ministry.
- Workers are never to take a child home (or anywhere off of church property) without parental consent and another adult accompanying them.

#### 7. **Visitors**

- All visiting children are required to fill out a registration form at the Children’s Guest Center.
- After visiting your class the parents/guardians will have the option to have their child’s name added to the class roster.

#### 8. **Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect**

As a caregiver, you are a mandated reporter of child abuse or neglect. It is the legal responsibility of a mandated reporter to report all cases of child abuse or neglect they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse or neglect. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer, or both. Reporting probable cause of child abuse or neglect has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.

What is probable cause? Probable cause means that the available facts, when viewed in light of the surrounding circumstances, would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. A report based on probable cause does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child. If you have any question at all, you should bring it to your ministry coordinator or a WSCC staff member.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, WSCC has adopted the following guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:

Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately do the following:

- Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured.
- Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children.
- Contact your ministry coordinator immediately and work with them to contact the DCSF Hotline: 1-800-25-ABUSE

#### **9. Reporting of Suspected Abuse at West Side Christian Church**

A volunteer who becomes aware of any abuse or molestation occurring at WSCC or within any WSCC ministry will immediately report the incident or suspicions (in writing, if possible) to a WSCC ministry staff member. Any inappropriate behavior with a minor, even though it may not be considered true abuse, should be reported to ministry staff. Volunteers are to immediately notify a WSCC ministry staff member if pornography or other inappropriate materials are discovered in a minor's or other worker's possession.

WSCC's primary function in responding to allegations of sexual abuse or neglect is to ensure the safety and protection of persons who have been or may be harmed, to seek healing by providing pastoral care and other needed assistance to all who are affected, and to the extent possible, to respect the privacy and rights of the parties involved and the confidentiality of communications.

If an abuse allegation is reported, the volunteer(s) and WSCC staff will:

- Regard each allegation to be a serious matter;
- Treat each allegation with confidentiality and respect for the privacy of all involved persons;
- Cooperate fully with civil authorities; and
- Extend genuine care to all victims of abuse.

## HEALTH POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Typically an injury can be treated with a little tender loving care, a cool cloth and a Band-Aid, but we need to be prepared for anything. A first aid kit will be available at the Children's Welcome Center, if needed.

Please treat the child and complete an "Accident Report". Talk with the parent upon their arrival and let them know what happened (i.e. cut finger). Any time a child is treated using anything from the first aid kit, an "Accident Report" must be completed. Give the completed form to your ministry coordinator. If you are unable to find your ministry coordinator, then leave it at the Children's Welcome Center. In the event a child needs more attention, the parents will be notified.

A ministry coordinator will follow up with the parent, if necessary, the following week.

**Keep in mind that we are not authorized to dispense any over the counter or prescription medications.**

**Serious Injuries** involving but not limited to broken bones, convulsions, fainting, unconsciousness or other serious bodily injury should be treated as follows:

1. Remain Calm
2. Keep the injured child and your class as calm as possible. Speak assuring to the child.
3. Do not move the injured child and do not leave them alone.
4. Instruct a fellow children's ministry worker to dial 911 and alert the ministry coordinator so they can find the parents. If you are unable to locate your ministry coordinator quickly, go to the Children's Welcome Center for additional assistance in locating the parents.
5. If the child is to be transported to the hospital and the parent cannot be located in time, a children's ministry worker will accompany the child to the hospital.
6. The ministry coordinator will follow up with the parent as needed.
7. All volunteers and staff involved in the emergency should write out a report of what happened immediately following the emergency and turn it into the ministry coordinator within 24 hours.

## SICK POLICY

Children cannot be admitted into classes if they appear to show symptoms of easily communicable disease. As a teacher, you have the authority to decline a child entrance into the class. Certainly, this should be done in a private, delicate manner as to not cause embarrassment to the parents. This will help protect teachers and other families from illness. These signs include, but are not limited to:

1. Yellow, runny nose
2. Fever over 100 degrees
3. Open sores
4. “Pink eye”
5. Rash
6. Diarrhea
7. Impetigo
8. Active chicken pox

If a child complains of not feeling well while in your class and you feel that their parents should come and get them, find your ministry coordinator. He/She will contact the parents.

## CLASSROOM EVACUATIONS

In the event of a tornado, direct children to the hall and put them in safety position. Currently, our elementary children are to gather in E50 and E60. Once that space is full, children may get into position along the inner wall of the hallway.

In the event of an earthquake, direct children to get under tables and hold table legs, if possible, until the shaking stops. Then exit to the large playground with your attendance sheet and follow the procedures below.

In the event of a fire or other serious emergency that requires the church to be evacuated, the following action should take place:

1. Review and understand the evacuation route for your classroom, which is posted at the exit door of each room.
2. Before evacuating, count the number of children in your class. Take attendance again when you arrive safely to the evacuation area. Remember to take your attendance sheet with you.
3. The designated meeting place during an evacuation for children's ministry is near the north side outdoor basketball court.
4. Please stay with your group at all times. Do not leave to go get your own children, to obtain first aid or for any other reason. First aid will be brought to you, if needed.
5. Release children only to their parents (for ALL ages) and only after you have been given the okay to dismiss by a staff member. Do NOT allow parents to take their child from your care during the "process" of your evacuation. Remind parents they can walk with you but you may not release a child until you have arrived at your designated location and have been given approval from a staff member.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL ELECTRONIC CHECK-IN

Our check-in process enhances the safety and care that each child receives.

1. Only parents should use the check-in kiosk. Children are not allowed to check themselves into a class.
2. Parents or siblings (Jr High and above) **must** submit the appropriate receipt when picking up a child from class.
3. Upon pick-up, place an X on the receipt and place the receipt in your class' attendance box. Also check the child's name off on the printed attendance sheet. Please place the attendance sheet in your box prior to returning it to the Help Station.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFERING AND ATTENDANCE

Each department is responsible for taking attendance each Sunday. Teachers should find a blue folder inside their classroom that has a roster of children for their classroom. As each child arrives his/her name needs to be checked off accordingly. The roster should remain with one of your teachers rather than placing it back in the blue folder. Please identify the number of students and teachers in your class room on the attendance form and place it back in the folder. Place the folder outside the classroom door, propped up against the wall. Someone will come by to pick up the folders during that hour.

At least 15 minutes before the end of the 9:00 and 10:15 services, classes will receive a transfer list identifying what children will be going to The Dive. Once the other children are picked up, The Dive children will be escorted by a designated leader to the appropriate location. Be sure that the list matches the children you are escorting.

Each Wild Small Group is also responsible for collecting any offering monies that are brought to class. Once you collect that money, bring it with you to the Large Group room and put it in the designated spot. Our Children's Ministry team will designate a mission each quarter (or longer) where the missions funds will be donated.

## CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

Generally, all the supplies you need will be placed on your class's cart. However, in order to be good stewards of the church's resources and money, the following procedures have been put in place before you can purchase items to be used or given out in children's ministry.

1. Your department should already be equipped with items such as crayons, paper, glue, etc. If not or if you run out, please let your Service Team Leader know which general supplies you need.
2. If you need a special item that's not already provided, please contact your Service Team Leader. We may already have the item you need in our resource area or church office. If not, we can order it for you or approve your purchase for reimbursement. Any items bought without this approval may not be reimbursed.

## SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

At this time West Side does not have a formal special needs ministry. However, we accommodate many children with special needs. This is done on an individual basis.

When a parent approaches us regarding mainstreaming their child into our existing classes, we communicate with them to find out the extent of the difficulties and to ascertain how their child can be included in our programming. Usually when a parent approaches us, their children have obvious disabilities that meet the criteria for special education services in the public school system. Because our teachers are volunteers and not teachers who are certified to teach special education, parents are asked to recruit and train personal aids, if they are needed, who will accompany the child to class. At times, if the family is new to our church and not yet connected with other members, we may help them obtain personal aids. WSCC encourages teachers to take time to become acquainted with the condition of the child who is assigned to their class.

Some disabilities are not as obvious as others, and at times, you may suspect that a child with a learning disability or a behavior issue is in your class. With careful observation, you can identify some of these students and implement teaching and discipline strategies which are beneficial not only for that specific child but the whole class as well. GROUP Publishing has an online article entitled: "How to Recognize Kids With Learning Disabilities." Here is the link: <http://www.childrensministry.com/article.asp?ID=1887>

In the same article, Barb Malone, an early childhood special educator in Colorado, suggests:

**\*Be flexible with your teaching methods.** Give children choices of activities by varying the materials and using both visual and auditory input. That way, a child with a reading delay won't feel self-conscious if he or she can choose a listening activity over a writing activity.

**\*Communicate with parents.** Ask parents for suggestions about what works with their child and what's being done at school. Keep parents posted on progress.

**\*Be sensitive.** Don't assume the child who acts out is "bad." The child may just be trying to cope with a learning disability.

**\*Use lots of praise.** Notice what the child does right. Remind the child that everyone has difficulties in some way. Then give the child the genuine love of a God-who loves us just as we are!

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our goal is to create a respectful, fun environment where parents partner with ministry leaders to provide an exciting spiritual experience for kids. This Discipline Policy is intended to provide the structure and expectations needed to create an environment where all children can safely enjoy WSCC's children's ministry programming.

### Behavior Guidelines

Appropriate behavior is defined as a cooperative spirit on the part of the child. Inappropriate behavior is defined as defiant, disruptive or harmful behavior to oneself or others. Inappropriate behavior will be addressed by a children's ministry leader and will be handled in a manner outlined in this the Discipline Policy.

### Policy Definition

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Offense- Verbal Warning

The child will be separated from other children and verbally made aware of the inappropriate behavior by a children's ministry leader. The leader will clearly define, without degrading or embarrassing the child, how to alter the behavior so that it is acceptable.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense - Time-Out

The leader will separate the child from the class. In a controlled, but authoritative tone, the teacher will remind the child of the inappropriate behavior. The child will then be required to sit separate from the rest of the class, but in full view of the leader for a period of time equal to the child's age in minutes.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense – Team Leader Speaks with the Child

Upon the third offense, one of our Children's Ministry Leaders will speak with the child in the hallway, explaining the consequences for continued poor behavior. The child will be reminded that their parents will be notified.

The Leader will make the decision whether or not a parent needs to be notified during service (\*\*Severe misconduct), after the service/at pick-up or via a phone call later in the day. Our goal is to talk to the parent in a private location, in person or after the service when possible.

A meeting with the parent, child and Director may be requested to discuss solutions. If steps 1-3 are a common occurrence, the Director may ask the parent to attend programming with their child for a determined period of time.

\*\*Severe misconduct (resulting in parents being paged during worship) is defined as:

- 1) Behavior that puts the child or another person in immediate danger.
- 2) Behavior that causes disruption to the point there the class/program cannot continue.

Children need limits, lovingly set, to help them experience a sense of security and order and so that the teacher may conduct class for the remaining children attending church. Children's ministry workers **NEVER** hit, spank, shake, or verbally abuse children.

Unfortunately, there are times that a parent may get defensive regarding any negatively perceived comment about their child. If a conversation with a parent does not go well, let your ministry coordinator know.

# CHILD Accident Report

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ Room \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Accident: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Injury: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

First Aid Administered: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Activity at time of accident: \_\_\_\_\_

Person attending to accident: \_\_\_\_\_

Other staff present: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents were notified of the incident by: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ REPORT

## Signatures:

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Department Leader \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# VOLUNTEER COVENANT // volunteer copy

This covenant represents a ministry partnership between:

\_\_\_\_\_ and the Children's Ministry of West Side Christian Church.

In this partnership, \_\_\_\_\_ is responsible for:  
name of volunteer

- **Fulfilling the duties outlined in the accompanying volunteer handbook & job description**  
(1 Corinthians 15:58; Colossians 3:23)
- **Reflecting Christ-like character**  
(Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 2:5-10; Colossians 3:12)
- **Being known for supportive attitudes and comments regarding WSCC and its leaders**  
(Hebrews 13:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-13)
- **Maintaining a commitment to spiritual growth**  
(Hebrews 5:13-14; 6:1; 2 Corinthians 13:11)
- **Participating in adult worship services each week**  
(Hebrews 10:25)
- **Receptivity to feedback and accountability**  
(Proverbs 1:5; 9:9; Titus 3:1-2)

In this partnership, \_\_\_\_\_ is responsible for:  
name of staff or leader

Maintaining all of the behaviors and values above, plus the following:

- Clarity
- Coaching and Development
- Encouragement
- Team Building

Signature of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Staff or Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

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