



# **LIFESPRI**NG **KIDS**

## Child Protection Policy

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LifeSpring Church

*Revised January 2020*

## **Our Vision and Vision:**

We are led by Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 2 Timothy 3:14-15:

“Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

We believe that children are most effectively disciplined by their family and specifically their parent(s)/primary caretaker(s) and a church to support the family’s efforts. Therefore, we think “Orange.” The family (red) and the church (yellow) uniting to help each child reach their potential in Christ. For our church, we exist to:

- Maintain a safe and secure environment for our children.
- Support and encourage parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4).
- Make the counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17) and praying for the children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10).
- Model/live faithfully before the children and model for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

## **Staff and Volunteer Expectations**

All children’s ministry staff and volunteers share a particular responsibility for loving the children as Christ loves them, setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives, ministering to the children, and understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children.

## **Parameters for the Child Protection Policy**

This child protection policy applies to children (infants who have received their immunizations through the 5th grade) who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of the church for the church’s public worship services or specific children’s ministry-related church-sponsored activities.

## **Personnel Summary**

Adults are individuals eighteen years or older. Minors are individuals under eighteen years of age. Staff are the paid employees of the church. Volunteers are adults who work with children and are not in the employment of the church. Helpers are minors who are at least one grade older than the children they are assisting and are assisting in some area of children's ministry alongside an adult.

## **Protecting the Children Before They Arrive**

It is of utmost importance that our children be taught and nurtured in a responsible and safe environment. Ensuring a safe environment begins long before a Sunday service. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children's ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend childcare training.

### **Screening Procedure**

To ensure safe and quality care, LifeSpring Church has established a screening procedure to approve all volunteers to work with our children:

- All volunteers must be eighteen years of age or older.
- Children or youth who are at least one grade older than the children they are assisting are welcome to help (subject to the approval and direction of the Children's Ministry Director), but they are always in addition to the adult volunteers.
- All volunteers must have completed LifeSpring Church's childcare training.
- All volunteers must have completed the volunteer application.
- Background checks and other appropriate screening checks will be completed prior to serving.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.

LifeSpring Church reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; ongoing life issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Any volunteer who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant should report that knowledge to the Children's Ministry Director. He or she also must be personally responsible for any legal obligation that he or she may have to disclose such information to the authorities.

### **Training**

All children's ministry staff and volunteers must attend LifeSpring Church's childcare training before they are allowed to work with the children. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing volunteers to update them on policies and procedures. Full-time staff who do not have direct contact with children will receive training on child

protection policies. Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to attend these sessions.

## **Protecting the Children As They Arrive and Depart**

### **Arrival and Departure Times**

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any service, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins.

Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the service. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, volunteers will ask other volunteers or staff to locate the parents. Under no circumstance should volunteers take the children with them to go find the parent. Children are to remain in the classroom until the parent arrives to pick them up.

### **Signing a Child in to Children's Ministry**

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry program will sign the child in to the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that LifeSpring Church event or program. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. Check-in and check-out of children applies to all children birth through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Team-leaders and staff have the right to refuse any child at check-in. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the room being closed because the adult child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children.

A parent or designated guardian must be on the church campus at all times while their children are checked-in.

### **Check-in System**

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be checked in by a parent or guardian.

Upon arriving in our children's ministry, parents/guardians will tell the check-in volunteer their last name. Each child will receive a sticker with a family-specific identification code on it. Parents/guardians will receive a similar sticker with a matching code. Upon filling out the necessary information, visitors will follow the same process.

At the end of the service when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The children's ministry volunteer will bring the child to the door, verifying that the child and the parent's ID code match before releasing the child to the parent. Repeat for each additional child/classroom as needed.

2. Children' ministry volunteers should REMOVE & DESTROY all child labels. This will prevent strangers from referring to the child by name and potentially luring them away from their parents.

Only the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class is authorized to pick up the child. The exceptions to this are:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of an elder or staff member of LifeSpring Church.
2. A parent can send their spouse to pick up their children, but the parent must still have the matching sticker.
3. A parent may make arrangements with the Children's Ministry Director/check-in volunteer upon dropping their children off, to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a service.

## **Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation**

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the volunteers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Children's Ministry Director. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Children's Ministry Director and an elder.

## **Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care**

### **Two Volunteer Rule**

For all children's classes and programs, at least two qualified, adult volunteers must be present and in the line of sight from each other in each classroom at all times.

Helpers are always in addition to and supervised by the two adults. Helpers are never to be left alone at any time with children without the presence of the two adult volunteers.

Staff and volunteers must never leave a child alone in a classroom.

Two male volunteers may not serve together in the same room without a female volunteer also being present. The only exception to this rule is when a male security volunteer temporarily substitutes for a female volunteer who is taking children to the rest room.

A staff member or volunteer may take children out of the nursery or classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the bathroom or in cases of illness, emergency, or evacuation.

Staff or volunteers should not have private one-on-one meetings with a child. When a meeting on the church premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present, and held with the knowledge and consent of the staff and the parents.

## **Child-to-Volunteer Ratios**

In addition to always having at least two volunteers present, the following ratios are to be maintained:

- Children 0-11 months: One adult for every three children
- Children 12-35 months: One adult for every four children
- Children ages 3-5: One adult for every eight children
- Children ages 6-12: One adult for every twelve children

Once a ratio is met, additional children should not be accepted into a classroom if doing so would exceed the ratio unless and until additional volunteers are added. If for any reason the ratio is exceeded, the Children's Ministry Director or the security team should be notified and asked for more volunteers in order to maintain these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

## **Diaper Changing and Rest Room Procedure**

### **0 Months through 2 Years Old**

Parents of children with dirty diapers are asked to change their children prior to signing them into the classroom. Volunteers will change diapers at least once or as needed during service, Only women are allowed to change diapers of children of either sex. Diapers must be changed in the presence of at least one other unrelated, adult volunteer.

### **2 Years Old through Pre-K**

Parents should take their children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class. At check-in and drop-off, parents should let the volunteers know if their child is potty training. A female volunteer will take the child and at least one other child to the rest room (but no more than the adult child ratio allows). The volunteer should wait outside the closed restroom stall door unless the child requires assistance. The child and the volunteer must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer) before returning to the classroom.

### **K to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

For all other classes up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, any child needing to use the rest room shall go with another child of the same age and sex. A female volunteer will accompany the pair to the rest room and wait outside the closed bathroom door until the children are finished.

## **Appropriate Discipline**

All children's ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). During correction, a child should never be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discrete; in the classroom (not in the hallway); and never outside of the sight of others.

Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for the child and redirecting to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate. Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to introduce children to the gospel.

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, volunteer or staff should contact the parents. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be immediately called so the child can be removed. Staff and volunteers are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering other children. Please report any of these problems (as well as the appropriate response taken to deal with the behavior) to the Children's Ministry Director. Once a child is removed from children's ministry, reinstatement is possible at the determination of the Children's Ministry Director upon having adequately discussed it with the child's parents. A child may be reinstated if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

For further information regarding discipline, please speak with the Children's Ministry Director.

## **Physical Touch Policy**

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult

physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force.

- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Volunteers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in “safe” areas and for brief time. “Safe” areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else’s child.

## **Security and Emergency Response**

### **Emergency Situations**

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help and/or the display monitors will be used to summon staff and volunteers to the children’s ministry floors to assist with the emergency.

### **Accidents, First Aid and Medical Emergencies**

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called and parents should be located and informed immediately. Volunteers should complete an Incident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident.

In the case of a medical emergency, LifeSpring Church partners who are medical personnel might be summoned to assist. Depending the severity of the situation, someone may also call 911.

### **Use of Technology While Serving in Children’s Ministry**

Volunteers and helpers will only use technology that has been previously approved by the Children’s Ministry Director. Out of respect for parents and their personal decisions related to technology, volunteers and helpers will refrain from any use of unauthorized technology in the classroom.

Volunteers are prohibited from photographing children while serving in children’s ministry, unless getting explicit permission from parents through the means of a media release form. This is for the protection of children and privacy of families.

## **Healthy Child Policy**

### **Communicable Disease Policy**

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, several guidelines are in place concerning disease.

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
2. Volunteers will use disposable latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures as necessary to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or use of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and volunteers.
4. Toys and equipment should be washed and disinfected regularly.
5. LifeSpring Church is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children. Team Leaders have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the Healthy Child Policy guidelines.

A child should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhea (Note: Children should be free of a fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before coming to children's ministry.)
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold – from onset of symptoms and one week thereafter
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Lice
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease.

Children who appear ill during a class will be kept at the nursery sign-in desk with a volunteer while the parents are located.

Please inform the Children's Ministry Director if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a LifeSpring Church service so that other parents may be notified if necessary. If a child contracts an illness and has been in contact with other children while at LifeSpring Church, it is the responsibility of parents to notify the Children Ministry Director.

Neither volunteers nor church staff may give any medication to any child.

Parents of children with special needs are encouraged to contact the Children's Ministry Director before signing the child into class. This allows the staff to assess the needs of the child and assist parents in transitioning their child into a classroom setting.