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## Policy & Procedures

## General Purpose Statement

Connection Fellowship seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Connection Fellowship from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and servants from false accusations. This policy is for all ConnectKids Ministries here at Connection Fellowship.

**Overview of Kid’s Ministry:**

The ConnectKids ministry of Connection Fellowship consists of children ranging in ages from birth through the completion of the 5th grade.

Our children’s ministry is divided into three groups according to age and school grades.

* Birth – 2 yrs.
* 3yrs. – the completion of K5
* 1st grade – the completion of 5th grade.

**Selection of Servants:**

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a. Any person seeking to work with the children during Sunday Worship must be a member of Connection Fellowship or a regular attendee of Connection Fellowship for three months.

b. **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with the children must complete and sign a written application supplied by Connection Fellowship. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Connection Fellowship.

c. **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, an interview with the ConnectKids Director and/or elders **may** be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the service opportunity.

d. **Reference checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant’s references will be checked. The applicant should include references from a current employee, as opposed to personal or family references, and from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Connection Fellowship.

e. **Background Check**

Before a background check is run, prospective servants will be asked to sign a Background check allowing Connection Fellowship to conduct the check. If an individual declines to sign the Background Check, he/she will be unable to work with children. The elders will determine what constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in strict confidence on file at Connection Fellowship.

**Serving:**

It is our policy that a minimum of two servants will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities.

* Servants of the children’s ministry must be pre-screened and trained. It is preferable that one of the two workers must be female. (Because available research strongly suggests that men are most often the perpetrators of child sexual abuse, we feel it is most prudent for the safety of our children and for the witness of our church that we uphold a female in every room policy within our children’s ministry. We do not expect that an incident will ever occur at Connection Fellowship, or want to suggest a lack of confidence in any male nursery worker. On the contrary, this policy is intended to protect male workers from any fraudulent charges of misconduct.)

Teenage Workers: We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or unpaid) who are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

* Teenage workers must be at least age 14.
* Teenage workers will be required to have had a recent background check through our ministry.
* Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children during Sunday Worship (the adult working with the teenager must be a female).

**Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action), which endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

* **Physical abuse**- any physical injury to a child, which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
* **Emotional abuse**- emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
* **Sexual abuse-** any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
* **Neglect-** depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Connection Fellowship becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the ConnectKids Director, and Elders for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

**Procedures for Allegations of Child Abuse**

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Connection Fellowship during sponsored programs or activities of Connection Fellowship, the following procedure shall be followed.

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The servant or person alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
3. We will comply with the state’s requirements regarding reporting of abuse, as the law then exists.
4. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event an investigation is not performed of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident.
5. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their service with children.
6. The church’s Lead Pastor or his designated representative will be our spokesperson so the other servants will refrain from speaking to the media.
7. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

## Children’s Ministry Drop off and Pickup Policy

Children in the nursery and the preschool classrooms will be checked-in by a parent/guardian and receive a security label to place on the back of the child’s back and one to keep to present to their child’s teacher at the time of pick-up at the welcome desk as they enter the church. The security label will include a specific sercurity code for the child, the child’s name, allergies, parents contact number, and any special instructions. The parent or guardian must present their copy of the security label in order to pick up their child from our care. The Teacher will then give the code back to the parent/guardian after matching the code with the specific child. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the security tag, the director of ConnectKids will be contacted. The director of ConnectKids will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

**Nursery (Birth – 2yrs.)**

Parents may begin dropping off their children at 9:45. Information sheets will be provided for parents to fill out according to allergy, feeding, and any other information necessary.

Children will only be released to parents, grandparents, or specified guardians.

**Preschool (3yrs. – 5yrs.)**

Parents may begin dropping off their children at 9:45. Information sheets will be provided for parents to fill out according to allergies, potty training, etc. If your child is potty training, please provide a bag with pull-ups and a change of clothes in case of accidents.

Children will only be released to parents, grandparents, or specified guardians.

**Children in the 1st – 3rd grade** will be released to children’s church after our time of worshipping in song in the adult service. Teachers will mark attendance after arriving in class each week.

Children will only be released to parents, grandparents, or specified guardians.

Children in grades 1st – 3rd grade will meet for Elementary Class on the 1st – 4th Sundays of each month. We will have family worship on the 5th Sunday of each month.

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all children at Connection Fellowship. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should **NOT** be dropped off:

* Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
* Green or yellow runny nose
* Eye or skin infections
* Productive (wet) cough or croupy (barking) cough
* Any unexplained rash, or open skin lesion
* Any skin infection – boils, ringworm, impetigo, etc.
* An eye infection or drainage
* Any communicable disease or infestation (such as lice)
* Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children with seasonal allergies must have a doctors note if they are exhibiting symptoms and desire to take part in the Kid’s Ministry. This is to ensure that the child is experiencing allergies and not a contagious cold.

Children who are observed by our servants to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted through text messaging or personal contact to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Parents of children with any serious allergies (such as food allergies, asthma, epilepsy, etc.), medical conditions or other noteworthy issues should note these on the sign-in form and verbally alert the ConnectKids Director.

## Medications Policy

It is the policy of Connection Fellowship **not** to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. A parent at home should administer medications. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the ConnectKids Director to develop a plan of action.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Connection Fellowship **not** to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the ConnectKids Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

**Restroom Guidelines**

Children five years of age (kindergarten) and younger should be escorted to the bathroom. The servants should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. Children age five or younger, both boys and girls, should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female. If a child requires assistance, the servant should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as they are assisting the child. For protection of all, servants should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

For children age six or older (1st – 3rd grade), the class room door should be left open while the child is in the bathroom. Servants should ensure that the restroom is empty and safe before the child goes in. Servants should not go in the restroom with a child unless there is an emergency. Children age six or older should not be allowed to roam the hallways without an adult supervision. This is to ensure the safety of each child in our care.

## Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be administered:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provided First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child’s parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the following procedures will take place:

a. E.M.S. will be called if warranted by circumstances (seizers, head injuries, broken bones, etc.)

b. One volunteer will stay with the injured child while the second volunteer will (enter from the back door of the worship area) immediately summon the parent and/or guardian, in addition to the children’s minister. The pastor will be notified of the incident. If there is a medical professional within the congregation, they may assist the injured child until appropriate medical attention is received.

3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional, or for injuries that are severe in nature.

4. Fire exstinguishers are located in rooms in case of emergency.

## Training

Connection Fellowship will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All servants are strongly encouraged to attend or view these training events or videos.