

Shepherd's Community Church

Child Protection Policy

Established and approved 09/2005

Updated and approved 07/2015

This handbook is designed to familiarize parents and caregivers with our childcare procedures and our child protection policy. The specifications contained in this handbook apply to official children's ministry occurring during the regularly scheduled weekly meetings of SCC. "Children's ministry" refers to classes and programs for children aged newborn through elementary school.

First Year of Implementation

We recognize that the first year of implementation of these policies will be full of administrative difficulties as every volunteer becomes an applicant and, hopefully, a caregiver by proceeding through the approval process. The difficulties are worth the effort, obviously. However, to reduce the difficulties unique to the first year, the children's ministry director and the pastor responsible for children's ministry may agree to waive an interview, but the reason for the lack of interview must be documented in the worker's confidential file. The interview can not be waived after the policy manual has been in force for six months.

Having a plan to protect our children does nothing for SCC's membership unless it is followed carefully by everyone. It will be the responsibility of the children's ministry director and the pastor responsible for children's ministry to ensure that new volunteers are approved and trained, and that existing workers are re-screened (at discretion of children's ministry director) and have the procedures re-enforced periodically. All re-screening and refreshing training should be documented in the volunteer's confidential file.

If you have any questions or comments about this policy, please contact the church office at 303-828-2600.

Mission

The children's ministry of SCC exists to glorify God by:

- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4)
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17)
- 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)
- Living faithfully before the children and modeling 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)

Goals

We seek to provide a safe, loving environment in which children can learn that:

- God made the world and everything in it, and what He made is good.
- They are very special people because God loves them.
- The Bible is a special book that tells us about God and Jesus.
- It is important to respect and love others.
- Church is a fun and enjoyable place to be.

Caregiver Expectations

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.

In order to maintain an adequate volunteer staff, all members and regular attendees with children in SCC's children's ministry will be asked to serve on a rotating basis for worship services.

Child Protection Policy

Our first concern is that the children be safe while they are in our care.

To this end we:

- Screen all children's ministry volunteers
- Require training for all children's ministry volunteers
- Utilize a safety identification system in the nursery and toddlers
- Employ scheduling procedures and caregiver/child ratios that optimize safety
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry

- Educate our volunteers to recognize child abuse and encourage them to report any known or suspected abuse to church officials and/or to appropriate governmental authorities consistent with applicable laws

Protecting the Children Before They Arrive

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, SCC has established several criteria that all caregivers must meet in order to work with our children:

- All caregivers must be members or regular attendees in good standing of SCC for at least four months. Such a policy gives the church an additional opportunity to evaluate applicants, and will help to defer persons seeking immediate access to children. This provision may be waived when the person is transferring in from another church and has a letter of recommendation signed by the pastor of that church.
- All caregivers must be eighteen years of age or older. Youth who are at least eleven years of age are welcome to assist (subject to the approval and direction of the pastor responsible for children's ministry) but they are always in addition to the adult caregivers.
- All caregivers must have completed the caregiver application and been recommended by or in consultation with the pastor responsible for children's ministry.
- All reference checks must be satisfactorily completed. Criminal record checks and other appropriate screening checks may be completed, subject to the discretion of the children's ministry director and the pastor responsible for children's ministry. No applicants with a criminal background will be approved for childcare service.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- Caregivers are to be approved by the director of children's ministry in consultation with the pastor responsible for children's ministry.

Training

All caregivers must review, understand, and practice our policies and procedures, awareness of health and abuse-related issues, emergency exit plans and procedures, etc. A first aid kit must be kept on hand and all workers are to be made aware the location and contents.

Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to discuss with Children's Ministry Deacons.

Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care

Two Caregiver Rule

We recommend two qualified, adult caregivers be present in each classroom at all times. We consider adults to be age eighteen or older. Youth who are at least eleven years of age are welcome to assist (subject to the approval and direction of the pastor responsible for children's ministry) but they are always in addition to and supervised by at least one qualified adult.

Two male caregivers may not serve together without a female caregiver also being present.

When it is necessary that only one worker be in a room with children, the door of that room should remain open at all times.

Family ministry teams work well together, and should be encouraged as a method of staffing. However for the protection of this family unit, we recommend the presence of at least one other worker not related to the family, or the open door policy stated above.

Child to Caregiver Ratios...

Children ages 0-2: One adult for every three or four children, depending on their ages

Children ages 3-5: One adult for every eight children

Children ages 6-12: One adult for every twelve children

Rest Room Procedures

Parents are asked to take their children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class.

If just one child must go to the washroom, an adult children's ministry volunteer should escort the child to the restroom and prop the outside door open. Caregivers must never go into a restroom stall with a child and shut the door.

When preschool children need assistance in the washroom, a caregiver may enter the restroom stall to assist only when a second worker is within visual contact or both the stall door and the restroom door are open.

The child and the caregiver must wash their hands with soap and water before returning to the classroom.

We strongly suggest that only female workers assist children in the restrooms.

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 include:

- Discussing the problem and appropriate behavior with the child
- Reminding the child of the problem and appropriate behavior, assuming they just forgot
- Correcting the child verbally
- Withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time
- Separating the child from the group for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children)

Children's ministry volunteers and staff member should never yell, spank, or hit a child. If behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, the caregiver should escort the child to his/her parents and explain why the child cannot participate in the class or activity.

Neglect

Neglect commonly results from a lack of supervision. To avoid neglect, we need to:

- Notify another qualified caregiver when taking a child to the bathroom, making sure that the class is not left unsupervised
- Make sure that children are always within view of the children's worker
- Not allow "wandering off" of small groups of children to secluded areas
- Stop dangerous play by children immediately

Accidents and First Aid

In the event of life-threatening injuries or illness, 911 will be called first and the child's parents will be informed immediately thereafter. Caregivers will complete an "Ouch Report" any time that first-aid is administered to a child or if any event occurs that is potentially of medical concern. The parents will be asked to sign the report upon picking up their child. The signed report shall be kept on file by the children's ministry director.

Healthy Child Policy

Communicable Disease Policy

If your child has any of the following illnesses within the previous 24 hours, please do not bring them into the children's ministry.

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Green mucus coming from the nose
- Ill stomach
- Diarrhea
- Thick eye drainage
- Exposure to chicken pox
- Frequent or phlegm-producing cough

If we notice any of the above items after your child is left in our care, we will ask you to come and get your child immediately.

Please inform the children's ministry director if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a SCC event so that other parents may be notified if necessary.

Neither caregivers nor church staff is allowed to give any medication to any child. The parent(s) or custodian(s) of children with any serious allergies, feeding peculiarities, or other noteworthy issues should note these issues on the sign-in form and alert the caregiver verbally.

Volunteer Guidelines

Adult Volunteers (18 and older)

Adult volunteers are to follow the policies and procedures outlined in this manual as well as to oversee any youth volunteers. Take this opportunity to teach the youth how to care for the physical needs of young children. If you find that a youth worker is more problematic than helpful, please notify the children's ministry director.

Respectfully implement the Healthy Child Policy among both the children and yourselves.

Youth Volunteers (11 through 17)

When supervising children in the nursery, an adult must always accompany youth.

Youth are not to change diapers or assist children in going to the restroom.

Youth are to honor requests made of them by the adults they are assisting. If the youth feels the request is out of line, he/she should speak with the children's ministry director regarding the matter.

All Volunteers

In order to ensure the safety of our children, the following policies are in place:

- Please arrive 10 minutes prior to the start of the service.
- Eat meals or snacks before your scheduled time to work. Do not eat in front of the children.

A potential volunteer may become involved as an "observer" while deciding to make a commitment or while waiting for approval. They must be clearly identified as such, having a nametag distinct from approved workers. They must also be in the company of an approved worker at all times.

Lost and Found

A lost and found is located in the fellowship area behind the Welcome counter.

Food in the classrooms

Food is permitted in Sunday School classes at the discretion of the teacher. It is important to be aware of any food allergies of children within the class prior to serving any such food/snack.

Due to the variable nature of the children attending Children's Church during the worship service, food or snacks should not be provided during this time.

Child Abuse Allegation Procedures

In the case that an alleged abuse incident *occurs during a church event*, SCC caregivers shall do the following:

1. Immediately notify the following: Boulder County Department of Social Services (303-441-1309), the Lafayette Police Department (303-665-5571), the child's parents, and one of the Pastors.
2. Document the incident immediately, providing as much detail as possible, including but not limited to, the following:
 - a. ALL witnesses to the incident.
 - b. the date, time, place of the incident or other relevant information.
 - c. the child's name, age, address, phone number or other relevant information
 - d. the alleged offender's name, age, address or other relevant information
 - e. the relationship between the child and the alleged offender.
3. Delays of even hours can impede the investigation. A report should be made within one hour from the time it is known or suspected that abuse has occurred.
5. If confronted by the media, the pastor responsible for children's ministry will be the only spokesman. The press will be informed only that there has been a suspected case of child abuse, the suspected offender has been removed from their position, the authorities have been contacted as well as the child's parents, and the names have been withheld to protect the child and the suspected adult. Do not engage in denial, minimization, or blame.

In the case that an abuse incident is reported to a SCC caregiver, *but didn't happen at a SCC event*, SCC caregivers shall immediately notify the following: Boulder County Department of Social Services (303-441-1309), the Lafayette Police Department (303-665-5571), the child's parents, and one of the Pastors.

Responding to the child/youth victim

When the child first comes to you, the caregiver:

- Take the child seriously.
- Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child.
- Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault.
- Tell the child he or she was right in telling you about the problem.
- Do not promise the child that you will not tell anyone.

Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support can help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. (In some situations, churches have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family. Future reconciliation will be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.)

Investigation

SCC volunteers or staff should not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases. It is not the role of SCC representatives to determine what actually occurred.

Treat the alleged perpetrator with dignity and support. If the alleged perpetrator is a church worker, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. It may be necessary to ask the alleged perpetrator to suspend his/her attendance for a period of time to preserve the emotional well-being of the victim. This is an area for pastoral discretion. Future work with children by the alleged perpetrator will depend on whether they pass the approval process by the pastor responsible for children's ministry.

Note: Reporting to child welfare is not a breach of confidence between personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. As a church, we are accountable to God to protect His little ones. Although it is our desire to protect the parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family, the protection of children from abuse is even more important. We want to follow the principles of submitting to governing authorities while at the same time helping parents to exercise child discipline that is consistent with the Scriptures, and in the best interest of the child.

Nursery-Specific Information

Who is allowed in the nursery?

- Newborns to 24-month-olds who meet the Healthy Child Policy.
- Caregivers—both adult and youth—who have met the requirements outlined in this handbook
- Parents of extremely anxious children who are calming them and transitioning them into the care of a nursery volunteer
- *Note:* Children above age 2 (or when ready) are not permitted in the nursery.

Nursery Volunteers

Remember that you are serving in a very important role. Look upon your time with the children as an opportunity to relate to them and to show them God's love. Share playtime, songs, books, hugs, discipline, and love with the children. You are making a difference in their lives!

If you are unable to be present at your scheduled time, it is your responsibility to trade with another volunteer. Only when you have exhausted all your resources should you call the nursery director.

Dress should be modest, comfortable, and appropriate for playing with children.

Family ministry teams work well together, and should be encouraged as a method of staffing. However for the protection of this family unit, we recommend the presence of at least one other worker not related to the family or the open door policy.

Nursery Cleaning

Pick up all toys. Broken toys should be placed in the Dirty Toy Bin with a note for the nursery director to fix or dispose of them. Please return clean toys to their proper place. Place all dirty toys in the "dirty toy bin" for thorough cleaning during the week.

Education

Do not just watch the children. Get involved with them! Play with them. Make the most of every opportunity you have with these children. Teach them about God as the Father, the Creator, and the Savior. Pray for the children and with the children!

Discipline

Do not ignore misbehavior. Remove the child from the conflict, explain to him/her briefly why the behavior was wrong, then distract with another activity, and observe for further problems. Children may be separated from other children at the discretion of the teacher. If the behavior is repeated, talk to the parents and ask how the problem should be handled in the future. If a child is causing too many problems or hurting other children, call and/or text the child's parents.

Parent's requirement before coming to the nursery

Parents should be sure the following items are done before they bring their child to the nursery:

- Child is not ill. See the illness section in this handbook.
- There are disposable diapers in the diaper bag.
- If the child has a pacifier, it should either be labeled with the child's name and attached to the child.
- Label any bottles or drinking cups.
- Label any toys, blankets, or personal items.

Nursery Drop Off Procedures

We ask that only parents or guardians drop off and pick-up their children.

Parents (or guardians) and children will be met by a nursery caregiver.

This person will do the following:

- Ask the parent to initial on the sign-in sheet and complete any needed information including allergies and specific child-care instructions.
- Hand a security tag to the parent, explaining that this security tag must be returned when the parent picks up the child.

Note: This tag allows the adult in possession of it to remove the child from the nursery in the event that the parent/guardian who signs in the child is unable to sign the child out. Parents will be strongly encouraged to guard this tag and not give it to anyone without their permission to take responsibility for their child.

- Ensure the child's diaper bag, bottles, cups, etc. is labeled.

Note: The caregiver should not receive a child into the nursery until the parents have properly signed in the child.

We respectfully ask nursery parents to:

- Accept separation anxiety as normal and healthy
- Keep the good-bye brief
- Know that the caregiver will text you if crying persists or if you are needed in the nursery.
- Please refrain from letting children bring personal toys in the classrooms. The only exception is a special toy/blanket needed to comfort an anxious child.
- Please do not engage in lengthy conversations at this time. Others may be waiting to sign in and talking takes attention away from the children who have already been signed in.
- If the scheduled caregivers have not yet arrived, wait with your child until a caregiver arrives and is prepared for the day.
- Understand that the nursery service is available only for those parents attending a church function. Please do not leave the church property until you have resumed responsibility for your child.

Nursery Pick Up Procedures

- Present security tag to the caregiver, and sign out your child on the Sign in Sheet
- If a parent does not have the appropriate security tag, he/she should first check with the other parent. If the card has been misplaced or was not originally picked up, the parent will be asked to wait until their child is the last to remain in the nursery. Then the nursery director shall release the child to the parent.
- Take the child's diaper bag, and any other items.
- Please pick up your child(ren) immediately after worship and before socializing.
- Sometimes even a well-adjusted child becomes fearful or anxious if they are the last to be picked up.

Note: Parents are not to enter the nursery when picking up their child unless the caregiver specifically requests that they do so. Other siblings are not invited into the nursery. This better enables the workers to maintain order and provide the level of security that parents would expect.

Food in the Nursery

- Please feed your child as close to arrival time as possible.
- Please pre-mix formula in bottles.
- Snacks of animal crackers or Cheerios are not served in the nursery. To drink we will only give the children water or their bottles or cups.
- Parent should be careful to note on the sign-in sheet any food allergies.
- Caregivers should always check the sign in sheet for any allergies

Diaper Changing

In order to maintain a healthy environment, the following procedures should be followed when changing diapers.

- Only female adults are to change diapers.
- Wear disposable gloves if desired.
- Never leave a child unattended on the changing table.
- Dispose of soiled diapers immediately by tying it in a plastic bag (ziplock) and throwing it in the trash bag.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer after each change.
- Clean changing surface after each change.
- Workers will always change diapers in such a way that another worker can easily see the child who is being changed.

Cleaning

Toys that have been in the children's mouths should be put in the dirty toy bin or sprayed with the cleaning solution provided, rinsed with water, then allowed to air dry.

Nursery carpet shall be cleaned a minimum of twice a year and spot cleaned as necessary.

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Volunteer Acknowledgement Form

I have read, understood, and agree to follow the Child Protection Policy of Shepherd's Community Church.

Name

Signature

Date