

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(Adapted from Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.)

Welcome to the children's ministry at Redemption Hill Church (RHC). It is our goal to create a safe and loving environment in which the children entrusted to our care are able to learn about the character of God, discover biblical truth, and learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ. 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 the church (Sunday morning). "Children's ministry" refers to classes and programs for children aged newborn to and including Sr. High.

Our first concern is that the children be safe while they are in our care. Therefore, we will:

- Screen all children's ministry volunteers
- Require training for all children's ministry volunteers
- Utilize a nametag and number identification system for check-in and pick-up
- Employ scheduling procedures and caregiver/child ratios that optimize safety
- Educate our volunteers about recognizing 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
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

SCREENING PROCEDURE

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

- All caregivers must be members in good standing of RHC for at least six months
- All caregivers must be 18 years of age or older. Youth who are at least 11 years of age may assist (subject to approval), but they are always in addition to the adult caregivers
- All caregivers must have completed childcare training.
- All caregivers must have completed the caregiver application and been recommended by or in consultation with the pastor responsible for children's ministry
- All criminal background checks and other appropriate screening checks must be satisfactorily completed, subject to the discretion of the pastor overseeing children's ministry.
- All applications and completed records of screening procedures will be kept secure.
- Caregivers are to be approved by the Director of Children's Ministry in consultation with one of the pastors.

TRAINING

All caregivers must attend childcare training before they are allowed to work with the children. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing caregivers to update them on policies and procedures. Parents with questions about childcare trainings are welcome to attend these sessions.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN AS THEY ARRIVE AND DEPART

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

Caregivers 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 service 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 service, caregivers will ask someone to locate the parents.

SIGNING A CHILD INTO 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 RHC event or program. This will authorize RHC to secure medical services for the child in the event of accident or injury if the parents or legal guardians are unavailable. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Snacks and Food" section below.

NAMETAG AND NUMBER IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be signed into his/her class by a parent or guardian. Upon signing the child in, the parent/guardian and the child will receive a nametag with matching numbers. Both the parent/guardian and child must put the nametag on immediately and wear it for the duration of the service. The nametag identification system will be used for all childcare and children's ministry classes up to and including 5 year olds.

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

1. The parent/guardian will sign the child out.
2. The children's ministry volunteer will bring the child to the door and remove the child's nametag. Ordinarily, only the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class and is wearing the appropriate nametag will be permitted to retrieve the child. There are three exceptions to this rule:
 - 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 (pastor) of RHC.
 - A parent may make prior arrangements with the Director of Children's Ministry or her designate to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.
 - Members of the church who sign in their children will have the option to initial a column on the sign in sheet that will grant permission to their spouse (and only their spouse) to pick up their child in the event that the parent/guardian who signs in the child is unable to sign the child out.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN WHILE THEY ARE IN OUR CARE

TWO CAREGIVER RULE

At least two qualified, adult caregivers must be present in each classroom at all times. We consider adults to be age eighteen and older. Youth that are at least eleven years of age are welcome to assist (subject to the approval and direction of the Children's Ministry Director), but they are always in addition to and supervised by the two adults. Two male caregivers may not serve together without a female caregiver also being present.

HALL MONITORS

The Hall Monitor is a qualified caregiver whose duties are not limited to any one classroom. Hall Monitors generally move about the hallways and buildings during scheduled service times to observe any unusual activity and be of service to the other caregivers (e.g., locating parents or substituting temporarily for another caregiver.)

CHILD-TO-CAREGIVER RATIOS

In addition to always having two caregivers present, the following ratios are maintained during our Sunday worship services:

- Children ages 0-2 One adult for every two-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

The Children's Ministry Director or the Hall Monitor should be notified if more caregivers are needed in order to maintain these ratios.

REST ROOM PROCEDURE

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

2 year olds through Pre-K

In the event that a child needs to use the rest room, the caregivers will call the Hall Monitor who will step into the classroom (to maintain appropriate child to caregiver ratios) while a female caregiver takes the child and one other child to the rest room. The caregiver should wait outside the closed restroom stall door unless the child requires assistance. The child and the caregiver must wash their hands with soap and water before returning to the classroom.

Other Classes

For all other classes up to (but not including) Junior High, any child needing to use the rest room shall go with another child of the same age and sex. A female caregiver will accompany girls and a male caregiver will accompany boys. The caregiver will accompany the pair to the rest room and wait outside the closed bathroom door until the children are finished. The children must wash their hands with soap and water and return with the caregiver to their classroom. The Hall Monitor will be available to step into a classroom temporarily to maintain appropriate child to caregiver ratios.

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 correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the group for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children).

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members should never yell, spank, or hit a child. If behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, ask the Hall Monitor to call the parents.

ACCIDENTS AND FIRST AID

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits. Caregivers should be familiar with their contents and uses. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called first and the Hall Monitor will locate and inform the parents immediately. Caregivers will complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor.

SNACKS AND FOOD

Bus Station (Birth – 2 years)

We will not provide food to children while they are signed in under our care. If a parent desires to feed their child at a certain time during the services, we ask that they provide the food and specific instructions for administering the food to their individual child. All food needs to be clearly labeled with the child's name on it. Caregivers may offer properly labeled sippy cups or snack cups, as provided by the parents upon signing the child in.

Subway Station (2 – 5 years)

Rice Chex cereal and water will be offered to the children in Subway Station.

Commuter Station (K – 5th grade)

Snacks of various kinds WILL regularly be offered.

Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies

Parents should verbally notify teachers upon check in about the nature of any allergy or food limitations and note the information in the sign in book. If a child should not be given a snack of the above nature, the parent should do the following:

- Verbally notify the team leader on duty
- Place a red Allergy Alert note on the child's nametag
- Note the nature of the allergy and how to respond to an allergic reaction in the appropriate spot in the sign in book

Parents of children with allergies who attend regularly should talk with the Children's Ministry Director about how to handle any unexpected allergic reactions. Upon parental request, allergy information about children of members may be posted in the child's classroom. No food except for the church-supplied cereal and water will be permitted to be eaten anywhere in the classrooms. If a parent desires to feed their child anything other than the provided snack at any time during the services, we ask that they come and administer the food personally to their individual child in designated locations.

Serving Snacks

Caregivers should always check each child's nametag before serving a snack. If the child is wearing a red Allergy Alert nametag, the caregiver MUST check with both the team leader and the sign in book to determine the nature of the allergy. If instructions are not clear, no food should be given to the child without clarification from the parent/guardian.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

REPORTING PROCEDURES

The law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and, in organizations such as Redemption Hill Church, to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore, all employees and volunteers at Redemption Hill Church must adhere to the following procedures:

1. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or violation of the child Protection Guidelines of Redemption Hill Church, the employee or volunteer shall immediately notify a pastor or, in the absence of a pastor, a person designated by the pastors. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or neglect, an employee or volunteer will also immediately make a report to the local child protection service or law enforcement agency.
 - Physical signs of molestation may include:
 - lacerations and bruises
 - irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
 - difficulty with urination
 - discomfort when sitting
 - torn or bloody underclothing
 - venereal disease
 - Behavioral signs of molestation may include:
 - nightmares
 - anxiety when approaching the church building or nursery or preschool area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
 - nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
 - sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior
 - withdrawal from church activities and friends

- Verbal signs of molestation may include statements such as:
 - “I don’t like _____.”
 - “_____ does things to me when we’re alone.”
 - “I don’t like to be alone with _____.”
 - “_____ fooled around with me.”

Adapted from Child Abuse: Governing Law and Legislation by I. Sloan (1983)

2. Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.
3. All church employees and volunteers working with minor children will receive training at the beginning of each church administrative year regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

RESPONSE PROCEDURES

1. The official spokesperson for Redemption Hill Church shall be the Lead Pastor, or in the absence of the Lead Pastor, another pastor. All inquires or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
2. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protection Services agency of the county, our insurance carrier, the Conference or District Superintendent.
3. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protection Service or law enforcement authorities.
4. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim’s family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
5. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained, until allegations are cleared by authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
6. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
7. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the Lead Pastor or, in the absence of the Lead Pastor, another pastor, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.

HEALTHY CHILD POLICY

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, four rules are in place concerning disease. Both parents and caregivers must be familiar with these policies.

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. Caregivers will use latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or usage of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and Caregivers.
4. Toys and equipment are washed and disinfected regularly. RHC 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 following guidelines. A child should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:
 - Fever (Note: Children should be free of a fever for 24 hours after a contagious disease before coming back to church.)
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
 - Common cold – from onset through one week
 - Sore throat
 - Croup
 - Any unexplained rash
 - Any skin infection – boils, ringworm, impetigo
 - Pink eye or other eye infection
 - Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
 - Any communicable disease

Children who appear ill during a class will be kept at the nursery sign-in desk with a caregiver while the Hall Monitor locates the parents.

Please inform the Children's Ministry Director if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a RHC event so that other parents may be notified if necessary. Neither caregivers nor church staff is allowed to 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.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Universal precautions are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in a nursery setting and should be utilized. The method is very effective for protecting both the children and caregivers in the nursery from illness. This is not to imply that any children or caregivers in the nursery are carrying infectious diseases. By treating all bodily fluids as if they are infected, any infections or contaminants can be avoided at all times, providing a safer and healthier environment for caregivers and children alike.

Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- Remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the service, disinfect the room with Lysol disinfectant spray.