
North Shore Fellowship

Children's Ministry

Policies and Procedures



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Introduction

Welcome to Children's Ministry at North Shore Fellowship! Parents, as you read this, we want you to know we are serious about creating a safe and caring environment for your child to grow in the Gospel. Also, there are ways you can partner with us. Volunteers, as you serve our covenant children, we want you to know there are clear expectations regarding your responsibilities to help create a safe and caring environment.

We are already so thankful and appreciate the time you will take in reading this handbook and follow the policies and procedures found in it.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact anyone on staff.

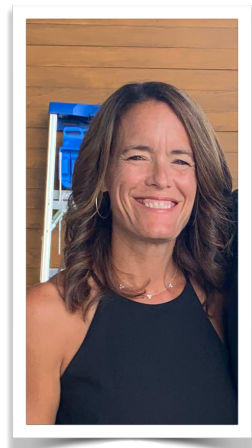
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Philosophy of Children's Ministry

AT NORTH SHORE FELLOWSHIP OUR HOPE IS THAT WE, AS GOD'S CHILDREN, WOULD MAGNIFY HIS GLORY IN ALL THINGS. OUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IS AN ARM OF THE COVENANT FAMILY GLORIFYING GOD AS WE:

GATHER – CHILDREN ARE A VITAL PART OF OUR BODY AS WE GATHER FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP, SUNDAY SCHOOL AND OTHER CHURCH-WIDE ACTIVITIES.

GROW – OUR CHILDREN, TEACHERS, AND VOLUNTEERS GROW IN CHRIST AS THEY DISCIPLE ONE ANOTHER.

GO – THE NATURAL OUTCOME OF OUR GATHERING AND GROWTH WILL BE COVENANT FAMILIES WHO IMPACT THEIR NEIGHBORS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

How is this done? This work can only be done in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit and by being grounded in his Holy Word.

We equip our covenant families to accomplish this mission by Growing Children, Supporting Parents and Training Volunteers, and through this unifying the body of Christ to glorify his name.

GROWING CHILDREN

Our covenant children are a vital part of our body from the moment they are born, as reflected in the vows we take at their baptism. Therefore, we seek to minister to our children at every level of their development always grounding them in the foundational truths of the gospel. In every aspect at church where our children are involved, whether that be corporate worship, Sunday school, vacation Bible school, children's worship, small groups or any church-wide activities, we seek to teach both objectively and subjectively that their value is anchored in their Creator and Savior and is never dependent on their behavior or abilities. In all our teaching, we start by grounding our children in the understanding that their identity and dignity is found in being image bearers who have been redeemed by Jesus. Therefore, our focus is on how God has made them and how He is using them as His Kingdom workers. The structure we establish in our programs seeks to grow children from a heart level, recognizing that obedience and growth come from the work of the Holy Spirit.

SUPPORTING PARENTS

We believe that God gives parents the primary role in discipling their children. Because of this, we intentionally provide parents with resources and learning opportunities to equip them. Growing our parents and coming alongside them as they face the difficulties of parenting is as vital as teaching our children. We also believe that God created His body of believers to be dependent on each other because every member of the body reflects God's image in unique ways.

TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

We welcome all volunteers because we recognize that sanctification is a lifelong process. We believe God uses His people in every stage and circumstance of life, equipping His people to serve Him. Because knowing Jesus is a lifelong process, we consider training our volunteers as much a part of our ministry as teaching the Bible to children. We train by offering support, providing curriculum that grows the teacher, and workshops that unite our volunteers and ground them in the Gospel.

Programs, Classrooms and Curriculum

Several programs are offered throughout the year to minister to our children while grounding them in the foundational truth of the Gospel.

Worship: We believe God calls each of his children to worship him. This includes the little ones! There is a certain grace that falls on each believer that hears God's Word read and taught. It is also a great blessing for other believers to see the younger generation worshipping with them. We encourage families to worship together. We recognize that this can be challenging at times! We are here to support you in that endeavor with resources and encouragement.

Children's Bulletin: The children's bulletin is designed each week to help children (Pre-K - 5th grade) follow along in the worship service. Parents are encouraged to assist the children in working through the booklet during the service by helping them fill it out. Coloring and activity pages related to that week's text are included to help the child follow along with the sermon.

Memory Work: We invite the whole congregation to memorize a passage that is tied to the current sermon series. The children have a designated time in Sunday school to work on the memory work, but we encourage families to work on it together at home through the week.

Sunday School: Sunday school is offered at 9:45 am (Pre-K-5th grade). Classes are located in the children's wing on the second floor.

Pre-K to 5th grade children are working through the curriculum from Great Commission Publications (our denomination's curriculum).

Pre-K & Kindergarten: A two-year study through the Bible. Each lesson reinforces how God relates to His covenant people and that He always keeps His promises!

1st and 2nd Grade: Learn what it means to trust Christ and obey his commands through a study of the Ten Commandments, the Gospels and examples of Old and New Testament believers while still covering the whole Bible in two years.

3rd and 4th Grade: Learn about God's design for Christ-centered living. Through a two-year study of the Bible, they focus on His grace in the law, His gift of worship, and the lives of early Christians and little-known servants of God.

5th Grade: Work through the G2R curriculum, "God's Promises" from Great Commission Publications and end the school year with a communicant/church membership class.

Vacation Bible School: NSF covenant children gather one week in the summer to hear God's Word, grow in their knowledge and understanding of God and His church, and go equipped to be a light in their communities. During this week, every member of NSF has the opportunity to use their unique giftedness as they serve our children and each other.

Ratios

Ratio of employee/volunteers to minors:

When supervising minors, it is required that a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors be maintained at all times. The supervisor overseeing the age group shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

Ratio for Sunday school, Children of the Word and VBS:

Pre-K & Kindergarten: one adult for every eight children.

1st - 5th Grade: one adult for every ten 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 (CDM), Assistant, or the hall monitor should be notified and asked for more volunteers in order to maintain these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the ratio is deterring by the age of the youngest child.

Parent Information

We ask that parents partner with us in ensuring the safety and well-being of the children by adhering to the policies and procedures that are outlined.

GROUP & AGE POLICY

As a covenant family, it is our hope that our children can grow up together as they experience life in our church through corporate worship, nursery, Sunday school, VBS, student ministries, and much more.

We seek to come alongside families in helping parents with the privilege and responsibility of covenant nurture. In order to help our children continue to build and strengthen the relationships they have with their peers we will:

- Have nurseries divided according to age
- Children will be put in their age groups beginning in pre-K*
- Children will continue with their age peers from pre-K to high school**

*It is our hope that many of our children will be with us from birth to high school. It is also our hope that by keeping children with the peers of similar age that they will grow up together and the bonds of friendship will strengthen over the years. This stability will help them recognize the constant love of

their church family. It will enable them to open up with each other as they reach the challenging stages of adolescence.

******We recognize that in a church our size there are many various educational paths chosen by parents for different reasons pertaining to a particular family and their children. For the sake of healthy group dynamics, classroom order and participation, and other social/educational factors we will seek to be sensitive to the parents' desires while providing input from the church staff along the way. In unusual circumstances, the collective wisdom of the parents, staff member overseeing said ministry, and other trusted entities will be welcome in helping parents make the best decision for their child.

SIGNING A CHILD IN AND OUT OF THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Any parent who would like to grant their child permission to participate in a children's ministry program will sign the child in at the check in desks located on the second floor when they arrive. **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 in this handbook. Check-in and check-out of children applies to all children Pre-K through 5th grade.

NSF's Children's Ministry director or assistant 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 due to 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 in the church building at all times while their children are checked-in.

Once a name and security tag are printed, affix the name tag to the child's front or back. Parents should retain the security tag portion as it is required for pick up.

For pick up, please present the security tag to either a teacher or helper. They will then match the number and release your child.

REQUESTS

- Please take your child to the restroom prior to checking them in.
- It is often most beneficial to quickly drop off your child, as this reduces confusion and crowding in the hall.
- Whenever possible, allow one parent to drop off and pick up your child in order to prevent crowding in the hallway.
- We welcome parents to spend up to three weeks acclimating their children to the class. Once your child feels comfortable, we encourage you to leave your child in class.

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- Only parents with a security tag are allowed to pick up children.
 - Please do not tell your child that they can dismiss themselves to find a parent and/or guardian, and please do not send an older sibling to pick up the younger child.
 - Please leave all toys and dolls at home as they can get lost or cause other children to be upset.
 - No adult can pick up a child without the corresponding security tag without direct consent and supervision of the hall monitor or a supervisor.
 - We encourage parents to volunteer in our classes!

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 CDM or Assistant. 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 CDM and an elder.

Volunteer Responsibility

REQUIREMENT TO SERVE

- Each volunteer in our ministry is required to complete the application process outlined in our Child Protection Policy.
- Volunteers are required to attend trainings when provided throughout the year. This is to ensure all volunteers understand and follow our policies and to enable them to nurture our children.
- Volunteers are entrusted to teach our covenant children the Gospel. We ask that volunteers commit themselves to the responsibility of building a strong, spiritual foundation in the hearts of the children.

SCHEDULING

- Volunteers will communicate with the children's ministry coordinator concerning the schedule.
- Once the schedule is set by the children's ministry coordinator, any changes should be made by switching with another team member and notifying the children's ministry coordinator as soon as possible. Team members' contact information is supplied by the supervisor.
- In case of an emergency that causes the volunteer to run late or be unable to serve, it is imperative to call or text the children's ministry coordinator.
- When a volunteer is no longer able to serve with the Children's Ministry, 4 weeks notice is needed to find a replacement.

GENERAL

- Volunteers must be knowledgeable about and adhere to applicable policies and procedures in this handbook.
- Volunteers are not allowed to bring food into the classroom for personal use.
- Personal belongings must remain off of the floor and out of reach of children.
- Phones are to be on vibrate and may not be used in the classroom except in the case of an emergency.
- Any special treats or activities involving food outside of the scheduled curriculum must be approved by the children's ministry coordinator.

ARRIVAL AND SETUP

- Please be on time. Punctuality is required and excessive tardiness will not be tolerated as it compromises the quality of programming for the children. Please remember that tardiness has a domino effect, involving coordinators, fellow teachers, children, and families.
- Before entering the classroom, pick up your name tag from the whiteboard in the hallway.
- Sanitize your hands once you enter the classroom.

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- Set out any materials needed for class, as provided.
 - Ensure that all tables are wiped clean and toys and supplies are put away neatly in their proper places prior to leaving the room.

CLASS TIME

- Anyone without an approved name tag is not permitted to enter the classroom. If there is a problem, or you feel uncomfortable asking someone if they are approved, see the children's ministry coordinator.
- One volunteer should welcome children while the other engages the other children.
- Be particularly aware of children with allergies and check all name tags for any indication of allergies or other special needs. Ask parents for further clarification.
- Review the classroom rules with the children every week. (Refer to Classroom Management section for details.)
- Whenever possible, sit on the floor with children to interact with them. Being on their eye level helps gain and maintain their attention.
- Remain in the classroom at all times unless you are leaving to take a child out to the hallway for a restroom break.
- Enjoy being with the kids! Remember that this is not babysitting, but ministering to these children and guiding them closer to the Lord.

DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

- Children must be wearing a printed name tag to enter the classroom. If a child arrives without a name tag, send the parent and child back to the checkin area.
- When a parent arrives, ask for the child's security tag before releasing the child. This is imperative: do not release a child without having the security tag.
- Match the child's name tag with the security tag sticker. Remove and destroy child labels before children leave their room. This will prevent strangers from referring to the child by name and potentially luring them away from their parents.

Wellness & Safety Policies

WELLNESS:

1. Children must be symptom free from the following illnesses without medication for 24 hours before entering the classroom:
 - Fever of 99.6 or higher
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Conjunctivitis (pink eye or other eye infection)
 - Rash
 - Nasal drainage that is green or yellow
 - Sore throat
 - Open sores
 - Cold
 - Excessive coughing
 - Lice
2. If a child develops any of these symptoms while in class, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child. If a parent cannot be reached via cell phone, the child will stay outside of the class with the supervisor or greeter.
3. Allergies are marked on the top left corner of the security tags. Parents should also discuss allergies with teachers at drop-off.

INJURY AND FIRST AID:

1. We can administer only Band-Aids and Ice Packs.
2. For children with severe allergies requiring an epi-pen, please give it to the children's ministry coordinator.
3. If there is an injury in the classroom, the teachers and/or volunteers should immediately tell the supervisor. Any injury must be reported since some trivial injuries can turn out to be serious.

EVACUATION:

1. If the fire alarm sounds while parents are in the service, they must follow the evacuation instructions out of the sanctuary. Parents flooding the childcare area will cause congestion and prevent the children from being able to safely evacuate the building.
2. All volunteers/supervisors/teachers are aware of the plan to follow in case of an emergency. The supervisors will be responsible for getting everyone out of the building and helping people to follow the evacuation plans in their designated areas.
3. In the event of an emergency, follow the evacuation plan posted in each classroom.

Snack and Food Policies

One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in classrooms. Volunteers may not bring food or drink with them when they serve.

In some classrooms, a snack and water are supplied for snack time.

Also, some children will struggle with allergies or react adversely even to mere exposure to certain foods (like peanuts). So we need to limit the types of foods and drinks used on the children's ministry floor.

Why don't we allow children to bring their own food with them and feed themselves? For the same reasons: we can't guarantee that volunteers will find/give the right food to the right child, that a child won't grab and eat another child's food, or that a child won't share his food with other children.

Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies

Parents of children with allergies should talk with the Children's Ministry Director about how to handle any 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, allergen-free cereal and water will be permitted to be eaten anywhere in the classrooms, unless authorized by the Children's Ministry Director and with parent consent.

*Coffee cups may be brought by teachers and volunteers but need to be kept out of reach of children.

If a parent desires to feed their child anything other than the provided snack at any time during the services, we ask that they administer the food personally to their individual child in designated locations such as the Fellowship Hall or Hallways.

Restroom Procedure

- 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.
- In the event that a child needs to use the restroom, the volunteers will bring the child out to the hallway and alert the Children's Ministry Director, Children's Ministry Assistant, or the Hall Monitor.
- Only a woman that has been trained in the restroom procedure by either the Children's Ministry Director or Assistant can take a child to the restroom.
- The designated restroom assistant can take up to four children to the restroom at a time.
- For one or two children, the designated restroom assistant will take the children to the single-stall restroom allowing the children to take turns using the restroom.
- For three to four children, the designated restroom assistant will take the children to the gender-specific restroom.
- When using the gender-specific restroom, the bathroom should first be cleared of any adults. Once cleared, the children may go in to use the restroom. The designated restroom assistant will stand in the doorway while keeping the children's privacy.
- If a child needs assistance while using the bathroom, the child's parent will be alerted to assist the child. The designated restroom assistant will not be allowed to assist the child on their own.
- The child and the volunteer must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer) before returning to the classroom.

Classroom Management

CLASSROOM RULES:

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| 1. Obey the Teacher | 3. Respect Others |
| 2. Listen | 4. Keep your Hands and Feet to yourself |

PROACTIVE STEPS FOR HELPING CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM:

1. Communicate the rules at the beginning of class every Sunday.
2. Make eye contact when speaking to the child.
3. Use positive reinforcement by acknowledging good behavior.
4. Have the child repeat what you have asked them to do.
5. Try to redirect the child if they are doing something they shouldn't be doing.
6. Discipline should always be given in love, not in anger.

PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS

1. Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
2. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for children.
3. Focus on positive actions.
4. Be fair and consistent with children.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Biting, hitting, pushing, scratching, or pulling is considered aggressive behavior. If a child displays any of these behaviors, he or she will be removed from the class and the parent will be notified.

DISCIPLINE STEPS:

1. Verbal Warning: If possible, whisper to the child in order to not draw attention away from the teaching and onto the inappropriate behavior.
2. Remove and Set Apart: Remove the child from the rest of the class. Have him or her sit in a different area of the classroom for a set amount of time or until the child is ready to participate cooperatively.
3. Alert the CMD. We will work together with the parents to decide what the best next steps are for the child.

SELF EVALUATION

1. Pay attention to how you feel
 - If you are stressed, children will sense that. Try to focus on the present moment and the children in front of you rather than outside stresses and circumstances.

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- We only have about an hour with these kids each week to give them our all and teach them about the depth of God's love for them, which we can demonstrate through our actions and our undivided attention.
 - Take a minute away if needed.
2. If you are struggling with a child, pass him or her off to another staff member or volunteer. You are never alone in the classroom, so let those around you help you through the difficult moments. Arrive prepared for the morning, in heart and mind.
 3. Arriving on time enables you to have time to prepare for the morning (and get that divine energy juice we call coffee...).

Positive Classroom Management and Discipline

1. Praise the Positive and reward good behavior.

Children often learn by modeling behavior. So try, for example “I love the way Sarah is sitting quietly with her hands in her lap. Great job!” The other children will follow quickly in hopes of being praised in the same way. Praising kids rewards good behavior and reinforces it for the entire class. You may also use rewards, such as: obedient children are the first to receive snack or art supplies.

2. Explain the rules of the class every week.

Children do well when they know what is expected of them. Keep the classroom structure similar from week to week. Having a predictable routine helps kids cope with an environment and understand appropriate behavior.

3. Be assertive: Say what you mean and do what you say.

Children need to know what consequences will follow for disobedience. When children know the consequences ahead of time, they are likely to deal with them with less arguing and complaining. It is best to order your classroom around what you have said you are going to do. You are the teacher. Be firm in giving instructions and following through with what you say. You should never yell at a child, but instead speak on their level. Look at them in the eye and make sure they are listening to what you say. If appropriate, have them repeat back what you just said. Do not discipline a child from across the room: go to the child and pull them aside. Do not let kids tell you what to do. You must be in control.

4. Make things fun!

Instead of going into things like clean up time with a negative approach, such as, “I’m so sorry, but we have to put toys away now...” try addressing it with a positive spin like, “OK, kids, I have a mission for you: do you think we can have all of these toys put away in two minutes?” Or, singing the clean-up song is a fun way to begin and encourage a clean-up routine. Don’t offer too many activity choices for kids. Switch out the toys so kids do not become bored.

5. Talk to a child who is crying.

Engage an upset child with something of interest. Talk to them in a way that distracts them from thinking about their parents and avoid saying that Mommy is coming. If absolutely necessary, you can remind them that Mommy and Daddy will come back soon, but do not make that the point of your conversation. For children who are likely to cry, ask their parents about how to best soothe them.

6. Incorporate the Gospel when you are disciplining a child.

Focus on God's love for the child and your love for the child. Be specific as you explain that you want him or her to follow directions, be kind to friends, participate, etc. Talk to the child about how it pleases the Lord when we obey Him. Remember that discipline should always be given in love, not in anger.

Child Protection Policy

PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy is intended to protect children participating in events sponsored by North Shore Fellowship (NSF). This policy applies to NSF employees and volunteers, who have the responsibility of supervising the activities of minors age 18 and below. This policy does not constitute a contract between NSF and its employees/volunteers or any other party. It is merely a statement of policy and general guideline which NSF will seek to follow. NSF makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in any given situation. NSF is not responsible for the individual acts of any employee/volunteer.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child: The term “child” or “children” shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Child abuse: Any action (or lack of action), which endangers or harms a child’s physical or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

a) **Physical Abuse:** any physical injury to a minor, which is not accidental, such as beating, spanking, shaking, slapping, burns, or biting. Other forms of physical abuse include massages, kissing, or prolonged embracing.

Examples of permissible physical contact include handshakes, high fives, pats on the back, placing an arm around the shoulders, sitting beside minors, holding hands during prayer, or brief hugs within sight of others.

b) **Verbal & Emotional Abuse:** persistent or extreme thwarting of a child’s basic emotional need to feel safe and secure. Emotional abuse occurs in an environment of constant criticism, belittling, humiliation, or persistent teasing. Other forms of verbal and emotional abuse include language or comments that are threatening, sexual, personally intimate, related to body development, or crude, regardless of how the communication is conveyed (e.g. text messages, email, phone calls, social networking sites, etc.)

Employees/volunteers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex. At no time shall any employee/volunteer pursue a dating relationship with a minor and should be sensitive to minors with “crushes.”

c) **Sexual abuse:** any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between minors, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest or exposure to pornographic material. Other forms of sexual abuse include obscene verbal comments, texts, emails, phone calls, or posts on social media. If employees/volunteers become aware of the existence of pornography in the hands of a minor, they should immediately report this to their supervisor.

Employee: Any individual who is paid by NSF on a full or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

NSF or Church: North Shore Fellowship.

Policy: NSF Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Response Team: A team of two active officers and one female church member that advise the Ministry Director and one of the Pastors if an alleged violation of the Policy is reported.

Volunteer: Any individual who is not paid by the church, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

NSF believes that appropriate personal relationships between adult employees/volunteers and minors of the church foster the community of Christ. NSF will seek to prevent the abuse of minors when they are participating in church programs. Preventive measures include employee/volunteer screening, training and supervision of all employees/volunteers and a commitment to eliminating opportunities for abuse within church programs. The employee/volunteer screening and selection process includes the following:

a) Six-Month Rule:

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until they have been involved with NSF for a minimum of (6) six months. The applicant must be able to demonstrate he/she has regularly attended and been involved in church activities for at least six months. This time of interaction between NSF and the applicant allows for better evaluation of suitability of the applicant for working with minors. The Ministry Director, with the prior approval of one of the Pastors, reserves the right to grant exceptions to this policy which will be documented in the applicant's file.

b) Written application:

All individuals seeking to work with minors must complete the following tasks:

- i. Complete a confidential written application;
- ii. Read, be in agreement with, and sign the Policy;
- iii. Give written permission for a criminal background check;
- iv. Provide personal references as requested;
- v. Be interviewed by the Ministry Director and/or a designated Screener.

Approval to work with minors must be granted by the Ministry Director. The application will be maintained in confidence on file at NSF.

c) Criminal background check:

A criminal background check and child sex abuse registry check will be required for applicants 18 years of age and older. No one who has been convicted of a felony or any crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children. The Ministry Director and one of the Pastors will address with the applicant any questionable information revealed in the background check or sex abuse registry. Completing the application to work with children authorizes the church to conduct these checks. Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file at NSF with access afforded only to appropriate staff on a need-to-know basis. As long as the employee/volunteer continues to work in the respective ministry, a background report will be re-checked every two years.

d) Employees/Volunteers who are minors:

Employees/volunteers, who are themselves under age 18, are a valuable resource in the care and nurture of our covenant children. The following guidelines apply to these employees/volunteers.

- Volunteers must be at least 14 years old; employees must be at least 16 years old.

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- Minor employees/volunteers will be screened and trained as specified above with the exception of a required criminal records check.
 - Applications submitted by a minor employee/volunteer must be signed by their parent/guardian where indicated.

PROCEDURES AND SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS

NSF has a zero tolerance for abuse in its programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every employee/volunteer in children and youth ministries to act in the best interest of all minors in every program. The following requirements shall be applicable to all employees/volunteers who have contact with minors participating in any program at NSF.

a) Safety of children

It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to promote the emotional and physical safety of minors giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion an unsafe condition exists, they shall immediately take appropriate precautions to protect all minors.

b) Immunizations

We are currently researching an Immunization Policy. Please see one of the Pastors if you have questions or concerns.

c) Two worker rule

A reasonable effort will be made to have two non-related employees/volunteers present in the room, or nearby, with minors during church activities. One-on-one contact between minors and employees/volunteers should be avoided. NSF recognizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied employee/volunteer may be present with a group of minors or with a single minor. In those circumstances, (such as Sunday school or counseling) doors to the room will be open and windows uncovered or the activity will be conducted in a public space, in view of other adults or minors. Written parental consent should be obtained and on file in the Ministry Director's office before the contact if possible; if not, a report of the meeting should be conveyed to the supervisor following the meeting.

Meetings that regularly occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor (junior or senior high small groups; private music lessons, counseling, etc.) shall have written parental consent from each participant on file in the Ministry Director's office before the meeting occurs. NSF recognizes that a fundamental goal of the junior and senior high philosophy of ministry is to build relationships with students and families and to have regular, intentional contact with students. Meetings that spontaneously occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor are to be encouraged rather than thwarted by the scope of this policy. Therefore, employees/volunteers will be responsible to conduct these meetings in view of other adults and/or minors, to phone parents to receive verbal permission before the meeting occurs and to file a report of the meeting with their supervisor following the meeting.

d) Observation of children's activities

Activities for children should be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open and, wherever possible, by leaving the door to the room open.

At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen. A clear, unobstructed glass window shall be installed in the doors or walls of all classrooms and offices typically occupied by children.

e) Ratio of employee/volunteers to minors

When supervising minors, it is required that a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers

to minors be maintained at all times. The supervisor overseeing the age group shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

f) Overnight procedures

Overnight activities will require a signed permission statement from the parent/guardian of the minors participating and must have a minimum of two employees/volunteers and maintain a ratio of one employee/volunteer per nine (9) minors. An employee/volunteer may never sleep in the same bed with a minor. There must be both male and female employees/volunteers present at all co-ed overnights and at least two same-gender employees/volunteers on same-gender overnights.

g) Release of claims

Prior to any activity away from the church's grounds, a Release of Claims must be signed by the child's parent/guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the church, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

h) No confidentiality

Employees/volunteers can never promise confidentiality to a minor. Employees/volunteers must report to one of the Pastors if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused.

i) Digital privacy

Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in areas where privacy is expected by participants. Posting ANY images on the internet is not allowed unless permission has been granted by the parents and approved by your supervisor.

j) Hazing and bullying

Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.

k) Controlled substances

The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and/or mind altering substances with minors is prohibited.

l) Periodic training and review of policies & procedures

The Ministry Director shall review this Policy with all employees/volunteers on an annual basis or when a change or addition is made to the policy. Each employee/volunteer shall acknowledge receipt of a written copy of the policy and of his/her participation in the annual training prior to the time they commence working with children and after each change to such policy. The signed acknowledgements shall be retained in the personnel file of the employee/volunteer.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used. Minors may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive minors may be removed from the group to another part of the room.

Please reference the Classroom Management section for more information on this topic.

CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATING THE POLICY

Any employee/volunteer accused of committing any act considered by the Policy to be harmful to a minor shall immediately be placed on 'administrative leave' until an official investigation by

DCS or local law enforcement is completed. Following the official investigation by state and local authorities, any employee/volunteer found in violation of the Policy shall be prohibited from future participation in all NSF ministries for minors. See the Response Plan section for further information on suspension and termination so as not to harm the reputation of the accused before DCS completes its investigation.

REPORTING ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE

Reporting Obligation

Tennessee state law mandates that anyone who has knowledge of or suspects abuse or neglect of a child must report it. The law makes no distinction between professional and non-professionals on the issue of reporting. Employees/Volunteers involved in NSF ministries to minors must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any good faith suspicion or belief that a minor is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement or showing of obscene material.

Employees who fail to report a prohibited act witnessed or suspected by them are violating this Policy and are subject to termination of employment.

Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act witnessed or suspected by them may be restricted from participation in activities involving minors.

Minors, whether employees or volunteers, are exempt from this reporting requirement but are strongly encouraged to do so.

To Whom To Report

Nothing in this policy negates the right or responsibility of NSF employees/volunteers (Reporter) to report suspicions of abuse to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) or the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

1. Report Incident To TN Department of Children's Services or Law Enforcement Agency

A Reporter may report to an immediate supervisor or one of the Pastors and allow the supervisor to make the appropriate report to DCS or a law enforcement agency. The supervisor who receives the initial allegation from a worker will promptly inform church leadership of the suspected child abuse and promptly report the allegation to the Tennessee Department of Children Services Child Abuse Hotline.

The Reporter should confirm that the supervisor has reported the matter to DCS or law enforcement. Should the Reporter have any doubt as to whether the matter has been reported, he or she should report it themselves directly to DCS or law enforcement.

Contact information:

- TN Department of Children's Services (DCS) Child Abuse Hotline: 1-877-542-2873. Someone is available 24/7. Resources regarding reporting information: <http://www.state.tn.us/youth/dcsguide/policies/chap14/14.1.pdf>
- The Hamilton County Sheriff Department (423) 209-7000

2. Report Incident To Church Leadership

An employee/volunteer (Reporter) is required to promptly report an incident to their immediate supervisor and the supervisor will promptly notify one of the Pastors. The Reporter will be asked to fill out a NSF Report of Child Abuse form, which is available from a supervisor and attached to this policy.

No employee/volunteer shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interview of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable for the church staff supervisor receiving the report to obtain a reasonable amount of information about the incident to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. In depth interviews of the child, the accused or a witness shall be conducted only by authorized officials of DCS or the local law enforcement agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by the church's legal counsel.

Any supervisory staff receiving an initial report of suspected prohibited behavior shall make sure the report is promptly made to a member of the Session or one of the Pastors.

RESPONSE PLAN

In the event that an incident of child abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on the premises of NSF or during a sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be implemented:

1. The Supervisor who receives the report will notify one of the Pastors and the Response Team consisting of two current officers and one female member at large.
2. The Supervisor who receives the report and one of the Pastors in consultation with the Response Team will designate a person to notify the parent or guardian of the minor unless the parent or guardian is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect.

3. Suspension of duties

If the person against whom an allegation has been made is an employee/volunteer (Respondent), then the Respondent will immediately be placed on 'administrative leave' pending an investigation. For Employees, the outcome of the investigation will determine whether the leave is paid or unpaid. Removal from duty should occur in such a way that the accused person is not immediately deemed guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee/volunteer can be returned to their prior position.

The Response Team will keep the Personnel Committee informed of the DCS investigation so that the Personnel Committee can make decisions regarding continuation of employment and compensation.

4. NSF will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.

5. NSF's attorney and insurance company will be notified.

6. If the alleged abuse involves an ordained pastor at NSF, the Tennessee Valley Presbytery will be notified and the stated Clerk's office made aware of the situation.

7. Investigation by DCS and local authorities

NSF will cooperate fully with any investigation of the incident by DCS or local authorities.

8. Liaison with the Community

The Response Team will select one person to act as the official spokesperson for NSF, who will be available to the media to answer questions and to interpret the child

protection policy. The use of a prepared statement with the advice of legal counsel shall be the means by which the child protection policy will be described to the public. The church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all children.

9. Confidentiality

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with an official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by a NSF employee/volunteer may be cause for immediate dismissal. One of the Pastors or the Response Team, in consultation with the state or local agency official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified. But in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with minors.

10. Ministerial Care

The church staff shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate care and support including third-party counseling.

Code of Conduct

Our children are the most important gifts God has entrusted to us. As a volunteer or paid worker with our children, **I promise to strictly follow the rules, guidelines, and procedures in this Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.**

I WILL:

- Praise, encourage, and acknowledge each child.
- Offer warmth and kindness to all children.
- Treat everyone with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
- Avoid situations where I am alone with children.
- Ask permission to touch for necessary purposes.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, competition, or comparison when working with children.
- Report suspected abuse to one of the Pastors, Nursery Coordinator, Children's Ministry Director, and DCS or police. I understand that failure to report suspected abuse to civil authorities is, according to the law, a misdemeanor.
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children.

I WILL NOT:

- Use actions, speech or discipline that frightens, humiliates, threatens, ridicules, or degrades any child.
- Touch children in areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit, other than diapering or assisting young children to the restroom.
- Use profanity in the presence of children.
- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering/working.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of any illegal drugs at any time.
- Pose any health risk to children.
- Use corporal punishment of any kind.

Child Protection Policy and Procedures Signature Agreement

North Shore Fellowship Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct

I have read and fully understand the Child Protection Policy of North Shore Fellowship.

I understand as a volunteer or paid worker working with children, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct or failure to take action mandated by this Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct may result in my removal as a volunteer or paid worker with children.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____