

Safe Church Policies and Guidelines For Children in Childcare Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church

Supervision of Children

The Childcare Staff (paid and volunteer) is responsible for the supervision of children during ministry activities, including observing the environment and equipment for unsafe situations, removing children from potentially dangerous conditions, and reporting problems immediately. The Childcare Coordinator should make sure that anyone who has not been successfully screened does not have unsupervised access to children. Supervision of children will be guided by the two-childcare provider rule described in the next section.

Parents are responsible for signing in and signing out their children from Childcare. A parent or guardian is the only adult who may sign out their child from Childcare unless a specific arrangement is made in advance.

The Two-Adult Rule

The two-childcare provider rule states that there must always be two non-related adults present when supervising one or more children. This rule is designed for the safety of minors as well as adults, and is required across all ministry areas with few exceptions (see guidelines for these cases below). Compliance to the two-childcare provider rule includes the following:

- There must always be two childcare providers present when supervising one or more children.
- The childcare providers must not be related family members (a married couple would be considered “related”). If two related childcare providers are working together, a third childcare provider must be in attendance.
- The childcare providers should be in sight of each other at all times.

Exceptions to the Two-Childcare Provider Rule

The purpose of the two-childcare provider rule is to make sure the actions of any one childcare worker are known to at least one other childcare worker and to encourage childcare workers to support each other in ministry.

Unplanned Situations with Only One Childcare Provider

Occasionally, childcare providers will find themselves without another worker due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed:

- ***Immediately inform the Childcare Coordinator***
- ***Visible location***--For any time when there is only one childcare provider present, the group must be in a location that is visible to others with an unobstructed window, open door, etc.

Youth Serving as Childcare Providers

We encourage older students to serve as childcare providers. A youth, age 14 or older, may count as an adult under the Two-Adult Rule. If childcare is staffed entirely with youth, periodic, unannounced inspections of the childcare rooms must take place, at least once per hour.

Check In and Check Out Procedures

Parents are responsible for their child until their child is checked in to childcare and once their child is checked out of childcare regardless of the child's age. Only a child's parent or guardian may check out a child, unless a specific and prior arrangement is made.

Restrooms/Diapering

Children in grades K-6 may use the in-room restrooms on their own. Children younger than 5 may be assisted, if necessary. In this case, the restroom door must remain open. If diapering facilities exist in the room, these are to be used. Otherwise, diapering facilities in the restroom may be used if the door remains open.

Discipline

The number one rule in ministry with children is that **Each of us is a Child of God** and should be treated with the kind of respect, love, and support that is expected by the commandment in Scripture to love one another.

Clear rules and expectations and consistent messages about behavior are the key to effective discipline procedures. Occasionally, children have trouble following the rules or display disruptive behavior. In these cases, the following steps will be taken.

1. Attempt to redirect young children to another activity.
2. Talk with the child and state clearly what the problem behavior is and what the child should do instead with children old enough to understand.
3. If the child continues to exhibit problem behavior, the childcare worker should discuss the behavior with the Childcare Coordinator. The Childcare Coordinator should determine will determine the next step.

Physical Contact

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between childcare workers and children. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate.

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children. Examples of **positive and appropriate** forms of affection:

- Brief hugs or side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder, back or head
- Handshakes
- High-fives, hand slapping and fist taps
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during group prayer

The following forms of affection are considered **inappropriate** with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth

Communication Outside of Usual Ministry Functions

Any communication with childcare age children should be through the parents.

Emergencies and Injuries

Childcare providers should be prepared to protect children in the case of emergencies. The following phone numbers should be programmed into cell phones. Note that 911 calls by cell phones are often not as direct as dialing the local emergency authorities.

In the event of a medical emergency on a Sunday, one volunteer should immediately go to the church and alert the ushers. They will activate the emergency medical response team.

Sunnyvale Emergency: 911

If calling from a cell phone, immediately tell operator

“I have a medical emergency in Sunnyvale, CA”

Sunnyvale Police (nonemergency): 730-7100

Church Office: 408-739-1892 (business hours are 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)

Medical Supplies

A number of basic medical supplies are located in the closet in the men’s room in the narthex of the sanctuary as well as in room 702, and an AED is located in the church office. For medical problems that require more serious attention call 911 or local emergency phone number.

For minor injuries, childcare providers can follow basic first aid. An adult with first aid training should be summoned when available.

Criminal or Potentially Dangerous Activity

A childcare provider should call 911 or local emergency number immediately in cases of suspected criminal or dangerous activities on the church campus or near ministry activities.

Earthquake or Other Disaster

See *Earthquake Procedures* posted in classrooms.

Responding & Reporting

All childcare providers are expected to report any suspicious, careless, or problematic behavior of adults and youth leaders to their supervisor. Childcare providers should trust their instinct if something doesn't look quite right. If a childcare provider notices any signs that a child may have been abused or neglected, concerns should be reported immediately to the supervisor. It is very important to report any incidents or behavior that could possibly be considered signs of abuse. Overreacting is better than under reacting. The supervisor will decide how to proceed or will consult with church staff members about how to respond.

Concerns about suspected or actual child abuse or the behaviors of leaders and volunteers must be shared only with the program supervisor and those directly involved in the reporting process (e.g., church staff members, Child Protective Services) and not with anyone else.

Screening and Training:

Training for Childcare Providers:

- The Childcare Coordinator will screen each applicant.
- Each applicant will complete an application, an interview and provide references.
- The Childcare Coordinator will conduct trainings for childcare providers. The training will consist of periodic meetings to review procedures for safe childcare.
- A childcare worker must be fingerprinted within 90 days after turning 18.
- Every childcare worker will attend the 1 ½ hour training, "Safeguarding God's Children for Parents & Congregations" and "Safeguarding God's Children for Ministries"