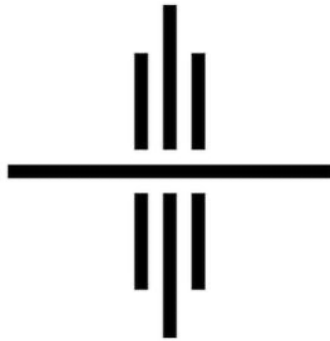


Children's Ministry

Policies & Procedures



Cities Church

Dear Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Cities Church!

At Cities Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and rules for our church volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, one that protects children, workers, and the mission of Cities Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please note that you've done so on the online Safety Questionnaire form.

Sincerely,

Joe Rigney (Pastor)

Mike Schumann (Director for Ministry to Children and Families)

Mission and Vision

The mission of Cities Church is to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18–20).

The aim of our Children and Families Ministry is to help parents to raise their children to become mature followers of Jesus. “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:29).

We do so by

- 1) helping parents to be the smile of God to their children
- 2) building a church culture that receives children in Jesus’s name
- 3) teaching children the whole counsel of God

All of creation speaks about God. The heavens declare his glory, the birds testify to his provision, and honey shows us what his wisdom is like. This fundamental truth—that creation reveals the character of God—is crucial for parents. It means that, as parents, we must tell the truth about God in our actions, our attitudes, and our words.

Be the Smile of God

At Cities Church, we believe that our fundamental calling as parents is to be the smile of God to our children. We are charged by God to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). God has designed us as parents to show our children what he is like. And God is fundamentally a Happy Father—a Well-Pleased Parent. Therefore, we want the pitch of fatherhood and the melody line of motherhood to be Delight, Pleasure, Joy. We want our children to experience our delight in God as it overflows in our delight in them. We want to receive the gospel, display the gospel, and invite our children into the gospel.

Receive the Children in Jesus’s Name

But the call to invite children into the gospel is not limited to parents. Jesus charged all of his followers to receive children in his name (Mark 9:36–37). As members of the New Covenant, we believe that we are called to be a shelter for the children in our midst. Our prayers and praises are a covering for them, and we shelter them in hope that by the grace of God they grow up to become shelters themselves.

Teach the Whole Counsel of God

While parents bear the primary responsibility for raising children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, the church has a vital role in the discipleship of children. The church's obligation to disciple children is rooted in the broader call to preach Christ, admonishing and teaching *everyone* with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Colossians 1:29). As a result, we're committed at Cities Church to instructing our children in the Christian faith, in the corporate worship gathering as well as in the everyday life of the church.

Overview of the Cities Church Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Cities Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete the following four safety steps **before** ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

*Additionally, in order to be eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students, or vulnerable populations, a volunteer must be: a member of Cities Church, a regular attender of a Community Group actively moving toward membership, or a regular attender of a Community Group who receives a special exemption from the pastors. Minors, whose parents are members, may complete the Childcare Youth Application Form to apply to serve in childcare, but, if accepted, they are not considered "volunteers" for the purposes of establishing a room's volunteer-to-child ratio.

Step One: Policies & Procedures

Staff members as well as volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and note on the Safety Questionnaire (renewed annually) that they have read and understood the material, and agree to comply with policy requirements.

Step Two: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Cities Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a

member of the Cities Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Cities Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, *Cities Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training* (live or online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every four years.

Step Three: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Cities Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to complete, and pass, the [Safety Questionnaire Form](#).

Step Four: Criminal Background Check

Cities Church requires that all staff members as well as volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Child Safety Policy

Abuse Tolerance

Cities Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Cities Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Children's Director or one of the pastors.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Cities Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the pastors and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the Cities Church Safety Committee. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a member of the Cities Church Safety Committee.

Enforcement of Policies

Cities Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Cities Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry's positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Children's Director and the Board of Elders.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

Reporting Violation of Policy

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, Cities Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Children's Director, or the Cities Church Safety Committee.

Consequences of Violation

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Cities Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Cities Church.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Cities Church.

Reporting Suspicions of Abuse to Law Enforcement Agencies

Staff members and volunteers at Cities Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the immediate supervisor of the area, the Children's Director, or one of the pastors.

Minnesota law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency (This requirement is known as mandatory reporting).

A staff member or volunteer will immediately notify an immediate supervisor, Children's Director, or one of the Pastors. Together with the immediate supervisor, Children's Director, or Lead Pastor, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate Minnesota authorities. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate Minnesota authorities.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Children's Ministries, the Children's Director will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the

child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation.

If appropriate, the Children's Director or the Lead Pastor will inform Ramsey County Family Services (651-266-4500).

Response To Report Of Abuse

The Cities Church Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Children's Ministries Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interactions with children.

- 1. The Children's Director** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
- 2. The Children's Director** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Children's Ministry program at least once each quarter.
- 3. The Elder Board** meets with the Children's Director once each year to discuss Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
- 4. The Children's Coordinators** meet quarterly to discuss children's ministry, including safety training and procedures.

Building Safety

The Children's Director will be responsible for ensuring that the children's ministry programs are monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers, and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Children's Area during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministries staff members or

volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

After every programming event, Children's Ministries staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Important: Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

Worker to Child Ratios*

Cities Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Infants (0mo to 12mo)	2	6
Big Room (1yr to 3yr)	2	8
Rooms A-F (4yr to 5yr)	2	9

* 9 children is the maximum number allowed in classrooms A-F. 16 is the maximum for the Big Room.

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Children's Director. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

LIVE AND DIE BY THE TWO-MAN RULE.

Four Big Rules

Rule One: Appropriate Discipline

It is Cities Church's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable — ever.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs (Must be in an occupied room). In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

1. Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some non-harm-causing physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
2. If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
3. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
4. Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
5. Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
6. Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.")

7. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Children's Director.

Rule Two: Two-Man Rule

If you are with a child it must always be in the presence of at least one other adult who is not your spouse, whether in a room or the hallway. Never, never, never be in a room, hallway, or any location where you are the only adult with one or multiple children.

Rule Three: Appropriate Touch Rule

We don't have kids over the age of one sit in our laps. Instead, just have them sit beside you whether you're reading a book or playing a game. We also avoid tickling, holding hands, piggy-back rides, and face-to-face hugs. Note: We make exceptions for our infant room only (Kids may sit in laps or be held in this room).

Rule Four: The Bathroom

See the Table Check-In sheet to verify whether the child can use the bathroom on his/her own. If so, you and one other volunteer may walk the child to the bathroom, but under no circumstances may you go into the bathroom (If the child needs assistance just text the parent and ask the child to wait. If the Table Check-In shows that the child needs a parent's help, simply text the parent. Note: we do not change diapers, but instead text the parent and ask them to do so.

"Accidents"

Should be handled by reassuring the child and calling the parent or guardian. Extra clothing and diapers are available from Cities Church and located in a box on the changing table in the main hallway, however, only the parent or guardian may undress and dress the child.

Diapering

1. Only the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
2. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Medical Policies

Evacuation Plan

Evacuation of the building may be necessary in the event of a fire alarm. If this occurs, the following procedure should be done:

1. Volunteers in each room should take all of the children in their room out the nearest building exit (either at the end of the hallway or the middle of the hallway).
2. Bring the children to the parking lot of the neighboring school and keep them together by assigned room.
3. The Check-In person should verify that every child is accounted for.
4. Children must not be released to parents unless it can be verified by the check-in sticker number.

Medical Emergency Procedure

In the event of a medical emergency, the following procedure should be done:

- **First:** call 9-1-1.
- **Second:** have the team coordinator or check-in person call the on-call nurse.
- **Third:** inform the Children's Director (Mike Schumann)
- **Fourth:** notify the child's parent or guardian.
- **Fifth:** once the emergency has been handled, fill out an incident report form and give it to the Children's Director (Mike Schumann)

Accident, Injury, and Medical Emergency Report Procedure

In the event of an accident, injury, or medical emergency, the serve team coordinator and witnesses of the incident must fill out an Accident Report Form (available in the children's church area) and submit it to the Children's Director.

Sick Child Policy

Parents are required to keep their child with them if he or she has had any of the following symptoms in the past 24 hours:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Cough
- Yellow or green runny nose

Parents of children who begin to display these symptoms will be called to remove the child from the children's church area for the safety of the other children.

Additional Policies

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Cities Church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

Medication

Medication should only be administered by parents or legal guardians. If a child requires medication during a service, parents should plan to come to administer it at the appropriate time.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers in Cities Church's Children's Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the Children's Director concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

One-to-One Interactions with Children

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Cities Church Children's Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the Cities Church application and screening process should always be present.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Children must be properly secured in an age-and-weight-appropriate legal car seat restraint.
3. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
4. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Cities Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Cities Church, unless in an emergency.
5. No drivers under age 25 may drive Cities Church owned or rented vehicles.

Parental Contact

Parents who leave a child in the care of Cities Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Cities Church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved; we simply ask that they first notify the Director for Children and Families, the check-in person, or the serve team coordinator. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at Cities Church will be required to complete the Cities Church volunteer application and screening process.

Physical Contact

Cities Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Cities Church has implemented the following 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following rules are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

1. Side hugs, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director, or one of the pastors. Note: In general, it is wise to avoid having children sit on laps.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be

inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from any inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director or one of the pastors.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

Sexually Oriented Materials

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries at Cities Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

Tobacco Use

Cities Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Cities Church activities or programs. Cities Church is a tobacco-free facility.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Cities Church staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

Release of Children

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Cities Church staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. Staff and volunteers must use the Planning Center check-out system when releasing children.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Children's Director before releasing the child.

Supervision

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs. During church programming, staff and volunteers should **primarily** focus on supervising and engaging with the children. Being alert and attentive to the needs of our children is essential to providing a safe and fruitful children's ministry.