

Five Points' Children's Ministry Policy & Procedures

February 10, 2016

We don't have a program for kids. We have a vision. That vision is to see the next generation pursuing their joy in Christ alone such that they will worship him with us now and forever. Our Children's Ministry and those who volunteer with it are seeking to partner with parents and guardians in discipling their children. We can't accomplish this vision on our own—we need Spirit-filled parents, guardians, and volunteers to see to the care and instruction of the children of Five Points.

Consistent with Five Points' mission to remain a good testimony for the Lord and to abide by biblical principles, the following guidelines are established for the safety and protection of the children and members of Five Points Community Church. Because Five Points relies exclusively on volunteers to staff its Children's Ministry, it is understood that some flexibility is required to meet ministry needs in emergencies, unusual circumstances, and in needs outside of our primary ministry times on Sundays and Wednesdays. Nonetheless, Five Points strongly urges its staff and volunteers to adhere to these guidelines and, above all, to maintain the two primary objectives of these guidelines: that children be protected from harm and that the Children's Ministry volunteers have accountability structures in place.

Volunteer Requirements

All volunteers are required to ...

1. Attend Five Points for at least six months and are encouraged to join in covenant membership.
2. Complete the "Application for Working with Minors." Included in this application are approvals for national and state background checks, an application for central registry clearance, and two reference forms.
3. Sign and submit the statement on our policy for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, which lists common behaviors that can help recognize abuse.

All volunteers should be checked-in and ready to receive children into the room 15 minutes before an activity is scheduled to start.

All volunteers are responsible for finding a replacement in the event of a scheduling conflict.

Parent/Child Requirements

All participants in Children's Ministry functions must ...

1. Check-in all children on one of the three kiosks located throughout the church.
2. Communicate any special instructions (medical conditions, allergies, etc.) for the child on his or her nametag, as well as to the child's supervising teacher.

Parents/guardians should pick up their children within 10 minutes of the conclusion of an activity.

Check-in/Check-out Procedures

Nursery – Kindergarten

Upon arrival, parents are required to check-in their children at one of the three kiosks throughout the church. The kiosk will print a nametag for the child, a parent receipt with a three-digit security code, and an optional item tag for items accompanying the child (diaper bag, jacket, etc).

No child will be released unless the person picking him/her up presents the matching-numbered parent receipt. Only parents and siblings over the age of 12 may pick up children. No matter who picks up the child, the matching parent receipt must be shown.

In the event of a lost parent receipt, the child will not be released unless two Children's Ministry workers can verify the identity of the person picking up the child. If there remains any question about the identity of the person picking up the child, an elder should be consulted.

1st Grade – 6th Grade

Upon arrival, parents are required to check-in their children at one of the three kiosks located throughout the church. The kiosk will print a nametag for the child, which must be worn during class. There is no check-out procedure for students in grades 1-6. If students are capable of utilizing the check-in system swiftly and responsibly, they are welcome to check-in without a supervising parent.

Classroom Policies

Reducing Isolation

- Two caregivers must be present in each classroom at all times. At least one must be over 18 and the second must be at least 12 years old.
- All rooms will have open doors (full or half) or windows in doors to ensure visibility.
- Only scheduled volunteers or approved substitutes should be present in the room during an activity. The only exception is a parent or guardian caring for an upset child.

Restroom Procedures

- Parents are asked to take their children to the restroom prior to class.
- All children and volunteers using or assisting in the bathroom will wash hands with soap and water when finished.
- Children will be assisted in the restroom and diapers changed by adult female volunteers only.
- Every child's diaper needs to be checked during each service and changed if wet or soiled. The changing table must be disinfected after each diaper change.
- If a child is being potty trained, it should be noted during check-in and the child will be taken to the restroom often.

Appropriate Discipline

All volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. Volunteers must set and maintain high standards, thus modeling the goodness of God and godly authority. We expect children (beginning with one-year olds) to begin learning to listen during story time, to share with each other, to take turns, and to treat others with respect. We expect volunteers to be obeyed.

The above classroom atmosphere should be maintained by ...

1. Preparing beforehand and praying for the children.
2. Giving brief yet firm directions.
3. Proactively and positively directing children towards acceptable activities. For example, tell a child what he can do rather than what he cannot do: "Here is a paper for you to color on," rather than, "Don't color on the wall."

4. Verbally encouraging positive behavior and offer choices only if they are possible. For example, if the child is expected to come to the table, say "Here is a chair for you to sit on," not "Would you like to come to the table?"
5. 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/her behavior is endangering or upsetting other children).

Volunteers and staff members should never yell at, spank, or hit a child. If behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, the Children's Ministry Team Leader should be notified and the parents located. In all cases, parents should be informed of any significant or ongoing incidents, as they are the primary shepherds of their children, and will be expected to address these problems.

Physical Touch

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be easily misinterpreted. Volunteers are to be above reproach in all relationships, using care and discernment in all situations.

Food/Drink Policy

Parents *must* note on the check-in system any food allergies their child has, and if they do *not* want provided snacks/drinks to be given to their child. The only snacks that may be served are those provided by the church (outside of an alternative for children with allergies).

If a parent wishes to feed their child something other than what the church provides, he/she may check their child out of the classroom and feed him/her outside the room.

No hot beverages will be permitted in the nursery.

Wellness Policy

Five Points is dedicated to preventing the spread of communicable disease among children and volunteers. Volunteers may refuse a child on the basis of any symptoms.

1. Children who appear ill while participating in a Children's Ministry activity will be removed from class and placed with another volunteer while the parent is located.
2. If a child contracts a serious communicable illness (e.g., meningitis) and has been in contact with other children while at Five Points, parents have the responsibility to notify the *Ministry Assistant for Children's Ministry*, so that other parents may be notified, as necessary.
3. Neither volunteers nor church staff will give any medication to any child, with the exception of staff/teachers who have been instructed by a parent of a highly allergic child in need of an EpiPen.
4. If a child or volunteer has had a fever or vomitted in the past 24 hours, please refrain from participating in a Children's Ministry activity (volunteers will need to identify a substitute).

Monitor/Paging System

If the nursery needs to page a parent/guardian during a worship service, the security code on the parent receipt will be displayed in the lower right hand corner of the screens at the front of the gym.

Classroom Advancement

All children will stay in the same room from September to September (with the exception of Nursery, where children are advanced based on development). Because the *Children Desiring God* curriculum we teach builds from year to year, it is beneficial for the children to have the continuity of the same classroom for one full year. Additionally, they will move up with the same classmates as they grow.

If a child turns five before October 1, he/she will be in the Kindergarten class. Please use this guideline if you have questions as to which classroom your child will be in.

Curriculum

Five Points currently uses curriculum produced by LifeWay called *The Gospel Project for Kids*. The Gospel Project is a 3-year chronological study that covers Genesis to Revelation, showing how each story fits into the Big Story of Scripture—the story of Redemption. The Preschool, Lower Elementary, and Upper Elementary will study the same lesson each week, tailored to each group's age level.

Child Abuse Response Plan

Legally and morally, those who reasonably suspect child abuse are obligated to report it. In the event of suspected child abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional), the following policies will be observed:

Reports should be communicated to *at least* one of the following individuals within 24 hours:

- Brett Toney, *Associate Pastor for Administration* (bretttoney@5pointsc.org)
- Mike Martoia, *Chairman of the Elder Council* (mikemartoia@gmail.com)
- Julie Pittenturf, *Ministry Assistant for Children's Ministries* (juliepittenturf@5pointsc.org)

If it is a questionable offense (e.g., flirtations, shoulder massages, peculiar abrasions, etc.), notify listed individuals, and they will take the appropriate course of action.

If it is a clear offense (e.g., observing actual abuse), immediately remove the child from the situation and notify the listed individuals.

At this point, the supervisor will initiate the following response plan:

1. The elders will be notified.
2. If the person suspecting child abuse is a mandated reporter, that person must report it to child protective services; otherwise the overseeing elder will call the Child Protection Hotline (1-800-942-4357) and any other appropriate authorities. During this time, the person witnessing the abuse will be present, and he/she may need to provide a statement to the authorities.
3. The supervisor will document the allegation according to Michigan Department of Human Services standards with the assistance of the witness volunteer.
4. Every allegation of suspected abuse will be taken seriously.
5. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.
6. After consulting the proper authorities, the elders will decide on options regarding the alleged perpetrator. These will vary from restricting the individual's activities temporarily to prosecution.
7. The supervisor and elders will respond to congregational concerns. The church, as well as the witness volunteer, must maintain *strict* confidentiality concerning all information, including the facts of the incident, the identity of the victim, and the identity of the alleged perpetrator.

Emergency Procedures

Accidents and First Aid

- All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits.
- Parents will be notified anytime an injury (major or minor) occurs in the classroom.

Weather-Related Emergencies

In the event of a tornado warning, nursery and elementary children should move into the lower sanctuary and close all the doors to prevent injuries from exterior window damage. Preschool children should remain in their classrooms with the door closed and the upper half latched. Children will be checked out to the care of their parents as quickly as possible. Until then, volunteers will keep children seated on the floor and as quiet as possible

Fire/Emergency Evacuation

- In the event of a fire and/or fire alarm, 911 must be called and all persons will immediately evacuate the building.
- Ushers have been assigned the duty of assisting in the evacuation of children from the rooms in the event of a fire or another incident that requires evacuation. Parents *should not* report to the nursery or children's wings in case of an immediate, all-church evacuation.
- Volunteers and ushers will evacuate children to the ball field.
- Parents may pick-up children once they can be checked out in an orderly fashion.

Strangers/Transients

Any person appearing suspicious or out-of-place should be reported to the hall monitor, nursery coordinator, or church staff member immediately. If imminent danger is suspected, 911 should be called and the following lock-down procedures followed in the nursery and Children's Ministry areas.

Lock-Down Procedures for Nursery and Children's Ministry Areas

Note: Steps 1 and 2 should occur simultaneously.

1. *Call 911*

This may have already been done; if you are not absolutely sure, call again, giving the following information:

- Location: Inform 911 dispatcher of our location (3411 E. Walton Blvd.) and the nature of the threat.
- Description of the individual posing a threat and any known weapon.
- If shots have been fired, tell police we have an "active shooter." Police nationwide are trained specifically to respond to an active shooter.

2. *Hide*

- Close and lock or barricade all classroom doors and latch the top portion.
- Cover any interior windows using curtains, blinds, sweater, coat, table, etc.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door, out of sight of any interior windows, and keep them as calm and quiet as possible.
- Turn off all the lights.
- The all clear will be given with a code word. Do not open the door or come out of the room unless the specific code word or phrase is given to the supervising teacher.