
Welcome

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to serve with us at the Downtown Church of Christ. The Ministry Staff and Shepherds of the Church are excited about your gifts and skills, and we look forward to your service as part of the Church's ministry team.

We are grateful that you have chosen to use your gifts and time with the children and youth of Downtown. In I Peter 2:9, God calls His followers "a royal priesthood." What an incredible privilege and responsibility. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that during your service with our Church, you are representing both our congregation and the Lord as you live out every aspect of your life. As you teach and work with children, please be sure you are deepening your relationship with the Lord!

May God bless us as we work together to share the love of Jesus with children and youth at Downtown Church of Christ.



SECTION 1

Serving in the Children & Youth Ministries at Downtown

Purpose and Commitment

Thank you for volunteering to minister to children, youth and families. Children are so important to God, and they are important to the Downtown Church. Thanks to paid staff and countless volunteers, we have dynamic, thriving ministries to children and youth. With so many people involved, we feel it is important to have guidelines in place to ensure the most effective and safe environment possible.

This policy applies to all who work with children or youth in any paid or voluntary capacity. All who volunteer must read, be in agreement with, and sign this policy. Volunteers must also comply with the application and screening process as outlined on page six. Background checks will be run on all volunteers who are 18 years and older.

The Downtown Church reserves the right to modify, supplement, rescind, or revise any policy or provision, with or without notice, as necessary. A current document will be made available online or from the Ministry Staff. However, at all times, this Church will comply with all applicable laws.

Downtown Church is a board-compliant 501-C-3 non-profit organization.

Harassment

Downtown Church is committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, Downtown policy prohibits unlawful harassment, including verbal, physical and sexual harassment. It is important for all volunteers to understand that jokes, stories, cartoons, nicknames, and comments about appearance, sexual content, or racism will not be tolerated.

Child and Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures

Application and Screening Process

Application and screening process for all volunteers:

- ♥ Must submit an application form. Applications should be submitted on-line at www.downtownstudentministries.org/children/child-safety
- ♥ Must sign the *Acknowledgement of Receipt Form* indicating an understanding of and agreement to adhere to the Downtown Child & Youth Protection Policies and Procedures. The form is available from the link above or in the DC office. Please return this document to the Church office or to one of the Ministry Staff.
- ♥ Must meet in person with the minister over the area in which you would like to volunteer.
- ♥ Must renew criminal background checks once every five years while volunteering in DC's Children and Youth Ministries. All volunteers will be asked to read and sign an acknowledge of receipt of the Child & Youth Protection Policies at least once every three years.
- ♥ All paid staff, adult member volunteers, and university volunteers will undergo a criminal background check.

Wellness Policy

The committee on Control of Infectious Diseases of the American Academy of Pediatrics says a child or youth should not be placed in a classroom with other children when any of the following exist:

- ✓ Fever. (A child must be fever-free for 24 hours.)
- ✓ Vomiting or diarrhea.
- ✓ Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough.
- ✓ Common cold (from onset through one week).
- ✓ Persistent cough, sore throat or croup.
- ✓ Any unexplained rash or skin infection, including boils, ringworm, or impetigo.
- ✓ Pink eye or other eye infection.
- ✓ Any colored discharge from the nose.
- ✓ Any communicable disease.

Prohibited Acts

Prohibited conduct includes any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or mental abuse of a child. Prohibited conduct may include, but is not limited to the following:

- ♥ Any display or demonstration of sexual abuse, insinuation of sexual abuse, or evidence of sexual conduct towards a child or youth.
- ♥ Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth.
- ♥ Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an older child/youth and a younger child/youth.
- ♥ Any kind of verbal, written, or texted remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendos directed to or about a child or youth.
- ♥ Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth which includes spanking.
- ♥ Inappropriate use of digital media including possessing or accessing obscene or pornographic materials at any Church event.
- ♥ Possession of or being under the influence of any illegal substances.
- ♥ Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol.
- ♥ Carrying any type of weapon on Church property.

We believe that appropriate personal relationships between adult volunteers and the children/youth (e.g., hugs), affirmation (e.g., pats on the back), support (e.g., prayer) and physical caretaking (e.g., changing diapers) are appropriate in our community of caring Christians. Care will be taken, however, to ensure that adults do not behave in inappropriate ways at anytime while caring for our children/youth.

Classroom Procedures

Classroom Discipline

Classroom behavior and discipline directly affect the ability of the teacher to teach and the students to learn.

- ♥ Pray for God's wisdom, direction and peace in your classroom. Pray for the students. Pray especially for the students who are disruptive and disobedient. You may need an extra measure of grace to love them as Christ would!
- ♥ Come early, be prepared and greet your students as they arrive. Class begins when the first student arrives!
- ♥ Understand the attention span of the students you are teaching; rule of thumb is that young children can sit and listen one minute for every year of their age. Have reasonable expectations and age-appropriate activities.
- ♥ Communicate classroom rules clearly and on a regular basis. Make sure students know your expectations. Make sure your expectations are realistic.
- ♥ Use positive reinforcement whenever possible instead of criticism. Never raise your voice or make degrading comments to or about a child or youth.
- ♥ Identify the students who seem to pick on each other or get each other in trouble. Don't allow them to sit together.
- ♥ Redirect a student's activity to help improve and privately correct.
- ♥ Always follow this rule: publicly praise and privately correct. Emphasize good behavior by name.
- ♥ The overseeing minister is available to assist when needed.

Steps to Good Discipline

1. If a student breaks a rule, the teacher will verbally warn them once.
2. If it is necessary to correct a student again, removal of a privilege is appropriate. Stress that disruptive behavior in Bible class is a serious matter. At no time should physical force be used to control a student. This includes all forms of corporal punishment (hitting, shaking, spanking).
3. If misbehavior continues, a parent conference should be set up under the supervision of the minister in charge. A plan of action will be developed to avoid further classroom behavior problems.
4. If a student's behavior is extreme, the volunteer/teacher should remove the student immediately from the classroom and place in the care of the minister in charge.

"...but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Hebrews 12:10, 11

Classroom Placement

Developmental Placement

Children in our nurseries promote based on developmental readiness, class size and staffing:

- ♥ Birth up to crawling - Nursery 1
- ♥ Walkers - Nursery 2

Early Childhood Age Placement

Preschool children will promote on the first Sunday in June and then as needed throughout the year. Parents with children turning two to five years old during the year should reach out to the Children's Minister about promotion. Many factors are considered when promoting preschool children including number of teachers, student readiness and class size.

Upper Grade Age Placement

Elementary through high school students are placed in June with their fall school grade level.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
Matthew 19:14

Mandatory Reporter

Downtown Church of Christ is required by Arkansas code to make a report of child maltreatment or suspected child maltreatment.

Suspected Abuse of a Child

Arkansas law requires any individual volunteering or working with children or youth at the Downtown Church of Christ to immediately report suspected and reported abuse. Arkansas Code 12-18-206 specifies that "a person required by this chapter to make a report of child [youth] maltreatment or suspected child [youth] maltreatment to the Child Abuse Hotline who purposely fails to do so is civilly liable for damages proximately caused by that failure."

What is reportable "Abuse"?

"Physical, sexual, or mental abuse by a parent, guardian, custodian, foster parent, or any person who is entrusted with the juvenile's care." (Arkansas Code 12-18-206)

Teachers and volunteers:

In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse, please report immediately to the appropriate overseeing or supervising ministry staff.

**Child Abuse Hotline
1.800.482.5964**

Signs of Molestation

Physical signs of molestation may include:

- ♥ Lacerations and bruises;
- ♥ Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area;
- ♥ Difficulty with urination;
- ♥ Discomfort when sitting;
- ♥ Torn or bloody underclothing; and
- ♥ Venereal disease.

Behavioral signs of molestation may include:

- ♥ Nightmares;
- ♥ Anxiety when approaching the Church building or nursery area (beyond normal separation anxiety);
- ♥ Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults;
- ♥ Sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior; and
- ♥ Withdrawal from Church activities and friends.

Reporting

Children & Youth Ministry volunteers will provide a written report of suspected abuse to the appropriate Ministry Staff. Ministry Staff will subsequently follow appropriate reporting procedures as mandated by Arkansas Code.

Every effort will be made to keep all conversations and written records pertaining to the alleged incident of child or youth abuse in strictest confidence. Documentation will be kept in a locked file.

Response Procedures (Church-Sponsored Event)

If an individual makes allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of a volunteer or teacher while participating in a Church-sponsored activity the following steps will be taken:

1. The first person to learn of an incident of misconduct toward a child or youth during a Church-sponsored activity should first secure the safety of the child, children or youth and then immediately report this incident to the appropriate Ministry Staff or to one of the Shepherds. This individual should not leave the child, children, or youth alone to report the incident and should not personally confront the alleged violator of the policy.
2. The individual reporting the incident will be required to fill out an **Incident Report Form** (see addendum) as soon as possible - ideally, immediately after the initial, verbal reporting of the incident. This written report is extremely important - the information provided will be critical to the investigation of the incident.
3. Two individuals (e.g. the person in charge of the event and the appropriate Ministry Staff, or the appropriate Ministry Staff and a Shepherd) will respond to inform and support the child's or youth's parents and family as needed.
4. The Minister or Shepherd will establish a Covenant Circle (made up of a counseling professional, at least one of Ministry team, a Shepherd, and a CASA volunteer or someone functioning in a similar capacity) which will assist with the investigation of the situation and determination of appropriate actions to be taken.
5. If abuse is suspected, the Ministry Staff in charge and a Shepherd will contact the accused, tell them of the allegation, and get a statement concerning the allegation. They will be informed of the Church's obligation to report the situation to Department of Human Services (DHS) and will be asked to suspend any involvement with children and youth until an investigation has been completed. Both statements will be recorded in writing and kept on file, using the "Incident Report Form".
6. If the allegation appears to be one involving inappropriate conduct, the incident must be reported to the DHS as soon as reasonable suspicion has been confirmed. Downtown's Administrative Minister should then contact the Church's liability insurance carrier.
7. All persons involved with the report and investigation shall keep the information in strictest confidence.

Response Procedures Cont...

Cooperation with Civil Authorities

The Church will cooperate with DHS and all other civil authorities in the investigation of an alleged incident of child abuse.

Response to the Media

The Shepherds will name an individual who will be responsible for all media inquiries about the alleged incident.

Response to the Congregation

If and when it is deemed appropriate by the Covenant Circle and the Shepherds, a brief statement will be given to the congregation regarding the alleged incident without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.

Response to the Individuals Involved

The Church will take appropriate steps to provide for the immediate needs of the alleged victim, the person against whom allegations have been brought, and any other individuals affected by the alleged misconduct.

Records of Alleged Child Abuse

Every effort will be made to keep all conversations and written records pertaining to the alleged incident of child abuse in strictest confidence. Documentation will be kept in a locked file.

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."
I Timothy 4:12

Emergencies

Safety First

Safety in the midst of an emergency depends on:

1. Prior planning.
2. Adequate communication of the plan.
3. The ability of teachers to keep a calm, clear mind when facing danger.

Be aware that each classroom has a fire exit plan that includes emergency contact information for ministry staff.

Fire Alarm

If the fire alarm sounds, an announcement will be made over the public speaker system. Do not assume it is a false alarm unless you are "called off" by your Ministry Staff. Information will be communicated via our public speaker system.

In the event of a fire, all children (6th grade and below) will meet on the south side of the children's building (on the children's playground). The path each Children's Ministry class should take is posted in the classrooms.

All youth will use the nearest exit to leave the building. (The youth center classes will exit the back stairwell and out to the north parking lot in front of the bus barn).

1. Take the alarm seriously.
2. Don't panic. Assure the children/youth everything will be okay and keep them calm.
3. Take a class count before leaving your room. Take your class attendance/clipboard with you (if one is available).
4. Assess the situation. Does your door feel hot? If not, check to see if it is safe to enter the hallway. The nearest exit is posted on a sheet by your door.
5. If your door is hot and/or exits are blocked, stuff damp paper towels at the bottom of the door to keep smoke from filling the room.

Fire Alarm Cont...

6. Keep children/youth as far back as possible. Throw a chair through the window, if applicable, to break it for an exit.
7. Clear away as much jagged glass as possible. Send one adult to the outside, (if necessary) pass children out one at a time.
8. If your exit is blocked and you don't have a window, or if you are on the second floor, place a wet paper towel over each child's nose and mouth. All children/youth and teachers should move as far away from the door as possible; lay on the floor and wait for the fire department to rescue you.
9. Fire extinguishers are located throughout the building. If you need to use one, use the PASS technique for operation-Pull the pin, Aim nozzle, Squeeze trigger and Sweep back and forth.

Information for Children's Ministry:

1. If you have infants or crawlers, put the children in a rolling crib and roll them to the nearest exit and to the designated meeting place.
2. If you have walking children, keep them together and exit the building. Emergency containers are available for 2s through 6th grade with flashlights and water bottles. Ropes are provided for 2s through 1st grade to be used to stay together as they exit the building.
3. When entire class is out of the building, proceed to the children's playground between the children's wing and the Sparrow's Promise.
4. Once outside, sit children down in rows. After the "All Clear" is indicated, hold your clipboard up (class name is written on back) for parents to see where to pick up their children. All children must be signed out by a parent!

Information for Youth Ministry:

Keep all youth together. All youth in the youth center will exit to the north parking lot in front of the bus barn. All other classes will follow the exit plan posted in each classroom.

Tornadoes

Tornadoes may strike with little warning. A quick response on the part of the teacher may save the lives of their students.

In the event of a tornado and when time allows:

1. Classes will be alerted of a tornado warning by an announcement that will be made over the public speaker system.
2. Don't panic. Assure the children everything will be okay and keep them calm.
3. Get a class count.
4. Slowly walk or carry your students to the basement.
5. Remain in a duck-and-cover position until an "All Clear" is communicated via our public speaker system.

The safety team will ensure that severe weather will be monitored while Church activities are in progress.

Power Outage

The building is equipped with emergency lights. Please stay in the classroom (unless there is another emergency such as tornado or fire) and keep the children calm. Flashlights are available in all children's classes. The Ministry Staff will be walking the hallways to check on your classroom.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Lost Child

If a child is discovered missing during class time, immediately contact Ministry Staff using the contact numbers provided on the Fire Safety Plan. Provide as much of the following information as possible: age, hair color, description of clothing, etc.

If this occurs between classes while the child is in the care of their parent or guardian, Ministry Staff and the Safety Team will work with the parent or guardian to locate the child. If deemed necessary, an announcement will be made over the public speaker system.

Shelter in Place

If there is a person brandishing a gun, knife or other weapon:

1. Shelter in place by turning off lights, locking your door (pushing in the button on the handle), and hiding the children as you can.
2. Call 911 and stay on the phone with the Operator to give information.
3. If there is a person committing violence with a weapon, call a Ministry Staff member (numbers provided on the Fire Exit Plan) to make an announcement over the public speaker system announcing that there is an intruder in the building and to shelter in place.

Medical Emergency

A first aid kit is located in the upstairs children's wing Resource Room (#241), and a smaller one is located on the preschool cart downstairs.

Minor Medical (small cut, disorientation, dizziness, etc.)

Contact a member of the Ministry Staff, see someone in the Resource Room (#241) or visit the check-in counter on the lower level. Note: Children's Ministry will not give any medication without prior approval of the parent.

Major Medical (heart attack, stroke, seizure, etc.)

Call 911 immediately and have a Ministry Staff or Safety Team Member locate a doctor or nurse in the building. Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) are located on all three levels.

Avoid contact with blood or other bodily fluids while trying to assist the person. After the person is treated, a biohazard spill kit is available in the Safety Office for cleaning and disinfecting the area.