



Children's Ministry Handbook and Policy and Procedures Manual

We are in the business of changed lives. We live to turn the uncommitted and opposed into unashamedly committed, fully devoted followers of Christ. Everything we do is measured by its usefulness, effectiveness and contribution toward this purpose.

WATERMARK COMMUNITY CHURCH
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HANDBOOK AND POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL
VERSION 3.0 (November 2003)

Watermark Community Church Children's Ministry Handbook

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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide policies and procedures for the Children's Ministry of Watermark and the volunteers who work in that ministry. Changes may be made from time to time in the policies and procedures contained in this handbook without prior written or oral notice.

VISION AND VALUES

Mission

To lead all children to be fully devoted followers of Christ.

Vision

Inviting all kids to know Christ in a way that transforms their daily lives and the lives of those around them.

Values

TRUTH-BASED

We believe that God's word is foundational truth, and it is our heart to train every kid to use it as their guide, authority, and conscience in everything.

RELATIONAL

We believe that life-change happens best in the context of relationships. Gifted, godly, and passionate adults who exhibit Christ to children, their families, and each other will show kids how to do the same...this modeling will impact God's Kingdom for generations to come.

ADVENTUROUS

We believe that church is FUN and that "it is a sin to bore a kid with the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Therefore, it is our commitment to challenge kids beyond the rules of church toward a vibrant growing relationship with Christ.

INNOVATIVE

We believe in inspiring kids to greatness by pursuing excellence in our programs, risking in our attempts to be innovative and ruthlessly examining everything we do in order to remain biblical, relevant and effective.

NURTURING

We believe that spiritual growth happens best in an atmosphere of emotional safety, physical security, and sanitary conditions. We are committed to exceptional standards in these areas.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PERSONNEL

Watermark intends to employ various full-time personnel called to minister to its children. In addition to this staff, Watermark may employ additional Children's Ministry Personnel for various assignments. The Watermark office will provide you with the current list of Children's Ministry employees and their basic areas of responsibility.

WORKER ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING

Watermark is also required to call upon volunteers to serve in various roles throughout the Children's Ministry. Workers are screened using the following procedures:

1. Application

All children's ministry volunteers must complete the Volunteer Application and Consent to Background Checks, including signing the Doctrinal Statement and providing references. The current form of the Volunteer Application and Consent to Background Checks is included in this Manual.

Currently, Watermark uses, subscribes and pays for the services of www.publicdata.com in order to screen through public records the background of all volunteers and employees for possible criminal history and/or registered sex offender information. Watermark regularly re-evaluates the availability of public data of this type and is open to suggestions regarding any additional available public data on its volunteers and employees.

2. Interview

All children's ministry volunteers must submit to an interview by either the Director or Coordinator.

3. Criminal History Check

Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or have been convicted of sexually oriented or sex related crimes either, misdemeanor or felony, cannot serve in any area of children's ministry. Watermark will screen www.publicdata.com and will rely upon the truthful answers of its reference checks and volunteers for this information.

4. Revocation

Watermark reserves the right to revoke any volunteer's ability to serve in the Children's Ministry with or without notice at any time for any reason or for no reason at all.

POLICY AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Watermark supports and maintains an environment free of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect include physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment. Sexual abuse is defined as the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, molestation, prostitution, or incest with children.

It is against the law and against Watermark's policy for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Watermark reserves the right to refuse membership, to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with Watermark any volunteer or employee who is or has been convicted of child abuse or neglect of any child.

Watermark will neither condone nor tolerate:

- Infliction of bodily injury upon any child or physically abusive behavior towards a child.
- Physical neglect of children, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care and supervision in relation to church activities.
- Emotional mistreatment of children, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks.

CHILD ABUSE: REPORTING & INVESTIGATIONS

Child abuse is a serious crime and Watermark intends to prosecute child abuse in any form to the fullest extent of the law. You are under these obligations as a volunteer:

1. Reporting requirements

All volunteers and employees shall immediately report and document any incident of abuse or violation of the two-adult or open door policy of which they have knowledge or which they have observed. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

2. Incident of abuse defined

An "incident of abuse" means any occurrence in which any person:

- Has threatened to inflict or has inflicted physical injury upon a child, youth worker, or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

- With respect to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult makes any kind of sexual advance, or makes a request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- Exposes a child, youth or vulnerable adult to verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

3. Imminent threat

In all cases where an imminent threat of continued or actual abuse exists, any witness shall immediately contact the Hostess, Coordinator, or Director to request that immediate steps be taken to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, the person witnessing or with knowledge of the incident of abuse shall complete a written report of the incident of abuse and submit the report to the Children's Director (or in his/her absence other appropriate staff or board member) and Watermark legal counsel.

4. Obligation to report to Law Enforcement

In all cases where any volunteer or staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth, known to the volunteer or staff member in a professional capacity, has been or may be abused or neglected by either known or unknown persons inside or outside of Watermark, the worker shall make a report to the local law enforcement agency's child abuse investigators. If the volunteer or staff member is in doubt regarding whether a report should be made, he or she shall telephone the agency anonymously and discuss the situation with an investigator to determine whether the report should be made. The volunteer or staff member shall make a written record of the name and the title of the investigator with whom he or she spoke and the recommendation made by the investigator and submit a copy of the written record to the Children's Director.

5. Internal Reporting Procedure

The person reporting an incident of abuse shall contact the Children's Director (or in his/her absence, a Pastor or any member of the Board of Directors). The reporter shall provide information regarding all relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse. Upon receiving a report of an incident of abuse, the person receiving the report, together with the reporter, shall complete a written report of the incident and submit a copy of the report to Watermark's legal counsel. However, in all cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom a report should be made, he or she shall be considered absent for the purposes of this reporting procedure and the report should be submitted to another appropriate Watermark representative and to Watermark legal counsel.

6. Responding to the report

When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, he or she shall immediately take steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, and after the report has been appropriately documented, the person receiving the report shall:

- Immediately contact the Children’s Ministry Director or any member of the Board of Directors who will then contact the parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform each of them of the incident.
- Immediately contact the Children's Ministry Director or any member of the Board of Directors who will contact the Watermark Community Church legal counsel. The legal counsel shall -- within 72 hours of the report -- conduct an investigation and determine (along with the Director of Children’s Ministry) whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the abuse may have occurred.
- Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim pending investigation.
- Take all steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer is barred from further work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults pending the investigation.
- **Conclusion of no abuse**

If Watermark’s legal counsel concludes that there is not reasonable cause to believe the abuse may have occurred, Watermark’s legal counsel shall provide a written report to the Board of Directors documenting the conclusions reached and the basis for those conclusions. The contents of the report presented by legal counsel where no abuse was found shall be confidential unless requested by law enforcement officials.

- **Conclusion of abuse**

If Watermark’s legal counsel concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse may have occurred, Watermark’s legal counsel shall provide a written account to the Board of Directors.

The written report shall:

- Identify the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer, and all witnesses identified and contacted.
- Set forth the allegations and the steps taken to investigate the allegations.
- Set forth the facts revealed by each significant witness.
- Set forth the temporary actions to be taken by the Board of Directors as well as a recommendation of additional actions to be taken by the Board of Directors.

In addition, Watermark’s legal counsel shall:

- Report the incident to the appropriate local law enforcement agency’s child abuse investigators.
- Report the incident of abuse to all other appropriate governmental authorities.
- Conduct all further investigations as directed by the Board of Directors.

VOLUNTEER/CHILD PROTECTION

Watermark intends to ensure the health, safety and well-being of volunteers and children. As a precaution and to ensure strict accountability from one adult to another, follow these rules:

1. Two teachers in room

Two adults should remain together in a classroom at all times. If a volunteer needs to leave a classroom, the Hostess, Director, or Coordinator must be notified to maintain the two volunteers in a room policy.

2. Restroom Policy

Volunteers should help a child use the restroom only if the child is three years or younger. In this case, a class should go together with both volunteers, or there should be two volunteers accompanying the child. If a child is three years or younger, the volunteers should leave the outer door of the restroom open. If a child is over the age of three, the volunteer should check the restroom before the child enters it and then wait outside for the child.

3. Appropriate touch

Appropriate touch is part of a healthy ministry. These are the following guidelines for when, where and how to use appropriate touch. These are also the guidelines for actions you as a volunteer should NEVER take.

A Using good judgment, the following are appropriate ways to touch kids:

- an arm around the shoulder
- walking hand in hand
- carrying small children piggy-back
- short congratulatory or greeting hugs
- a brief, assuring pat on the back or shoulder
- handshake and high-fives

B NEVER:

- never touch a child in anger or disgust
- never touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive
- never touch a child between the bellybutton and the shin
- never touch a child's private parts

4. Taboo topics

Certain topics of discussion are best left to parents and their children.

The following topics are best discussed as part of the official curriculum of Watermark taught by a Watermark teacher or left for parents and their children to discuss. If you have a question about the propriety of discussing one of these topics, speak with the teacher or leader in charge of the area in which you serve:

- The rapture
- The tribulation
- Satan - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion
- Hell - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion
- Denominations
- Speaking in tongues
- Human sexuality or reproduction
- Female menstrual cycle
- Drugs, alcohol, or other questionable behavior before salvation

5. Open door policy

Volunteers must keep classroom doors open at all times for safety and accountability measures.

ATTENDANCE

Watermark takes seriously the obligations to its children. Attendance is one of the important obligations and volunteers must abide by these guidelines.

1. Arrival

Volunteers must arrive one half hour prior to the event at which they are serving.

2. Departure

Volunteers must remain at the children's ministry event until the last child has been picked up by parent.

3. Notification

Volunteers must call their coordinator to inform them of their absence and confirm that a substitute has been found.

4. Substitute Requirements

Volunteers must make every attempt to find a sub from the provided list of children's workers. If he or she is unable to find a substitute, the volunteer must contact the appropriate coordinator.

SUNDAY MORNING EXPECTATIONS

Sunday morning is Watermark's primary time to serve the children of Watermark. On Sunday mornings, volunteers must adhere to these expectations:

Infant/Toddler Area

In the infant and toddler area, volunteers must meet these expectations:

1. Check in policy

Children will be checked in at the appropriate classroom and given a name tag, security card, and pager. Parents are given the security card and pager to take with them. Remind the parent that this card and pager is necessary for pick up.

2. Age requirement

Unless express permission is granted by the Children's Ministry Director, volunteers must be at least 15 years of age to volunteer in the infant room or 12 years of age to volunteer in the toddler room.

3. Diaper procedure

All children must have their diaper changed during their time in the nursery. Never move the child away from the changing table while changing a diaper. Volunteers must wear disposable gloves while changing diapers and must wear new gloves with each change. Volunteers must dispose of diaper in provided diaper pail. Volunteers must disinfect diaper changing area after each diaper. Volunteers must disinfect their hands after changing diaper.

4. Stroller policy

Volunteers may stroll up to 2 children at a time in provided strollers, but must stay within eye contact of the nursery area.

5. Room clean-up policy

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used in the nursery area.

6. Check out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has a security card which corresponds to the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security card, a Hostess, Coordinator, or Director must be notified to make the decision to release a child.

Two to Three Year Old Area

In the two to three year old area, volunteers must meet these expectations:

1. Check in policy

Children will be checked in at the appropriate classroom and given a name tag, security card, and pager. Parents are given the security card and pager to take with them. Remind the parent that this card and pager is necessary for pick up.

2. Check out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has a security card which corresponds to the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security card, a Hostess, Coordinator, or Director must be notified to make the decision to release a child.

3. Bathroom policy

Parents should encourage their children to go to the restroom prior to class. If a child needs to go to the restroom during class, a volunteer must ask for the assistance of the Hostess or another volunteer so that there are always two volunteers present while a child is in the restroom.

4. Children Transfer

Children should be taken to another program or classroom in an orderly fashion with one teacher monitoring the front of the line and another monitoring the back of the line. Children should be counted prior to leaving the classroom as well as upon arrival at the new classroom.

Four and Five Year Olds and Kindergarten Area.

In the four and five year old and kindergarten area, volunteers must meet these expectations:

1. Check in policy

Children will be checked in at the appropriate classroom and given a name tag, security card, and pager. Parents are given the security card and pager to take with them. Remind the parent that this card and pager is necessary for pick up.

2. Check out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has a security card which corresponds to the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security card, a Hostess, Coordinator, or Director must be notified to make the decision to release a child.

3. Bathroom policy

Parents should encourage their children to go to the restroom prior to class. If a child must use the restroom, an adult must accompany a child to the restroom and must check the restroom prior to the child using the facility. While the child is using the facility, the adult must wait outside for the child or the two teachers must take an entire class to the bathroom at the same time. Again, the teacher must check the restroom prior to children using the facilities.

4. Transfer of kids

Children should be taken to another program or classroom in an orderly fashion with one teacher monitoring the front of the line and another monitoring the back of the line. Children should be counted prior to leaving one area as well as upon arrival at the new area.

On Your Mark Area

In the On Your Mark area, volunteers must meet these expectations:

1. Check out policy

Parent must pick up children following an event. A child is NOT allowed to leave alone. A child is NOT allowed to leave with another parent unless a provision has been made prior to the event.

2. Bathroom policy

An adult must accompany a child to the restroom, while the child waits outside of the restroom, the adult must check the restroom prior to the child using the facility. While the child is using the facility, the adult must wait outside for the child. OR a teacher must take an entire class to the bathroom at the same time. Again, the teacher must check the restroom prior to children using the facilities.

3. Transfer of kids

Children should be taken to another program or classroom in an orderly fashion with one teacher monitoring the front of the line and another monitoring the back of the line. Children should be counted prior to leaving one area as well as upon arrival at the new area.

SECURITY

Please follow these rules to make sure our children are safe:

1. Stranger in the hall

Only parents, children's ministry volunteers, church staff, and children are allowed in the Children's Ministry area. All other adults (including any other church members) should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the Children's Area. If there are any questions or concerns associated with a stranger in the area, a staff member should be notified immediately to question the stranger.

2. Child custody issue

Due to the nature of child custody laws, volunteers must act diligently in making sure the correct people are picking up their children. Please be aware that only parents with custody of their child may pick up the child. If there are any questions regarding this procedure, please notify a hostess, coordinator, or director for clarification.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

In case of an emergency, do the following:

1. Medical concerns

Immediately report any medical needs or concerns to the hostess, coordinator, or director. The notified person will decide if 911 should be called and send a runner to the auditorium to notify the doctor on call. The teacher should remain calm and divert the attention of the other children. The victim should be kept quiet and lying down.

2. Weather alert

If there is a fear of dangerous weather, volunteers should wait for a hostess, director, or coordinator to instruct them in what to do. In no way should a volunteer act in such a way as to incite panic among children or other volunteers.

3. Fire

The first priority in any case of a fire is that all children and volunteers' safety is maintained. Any attempt by volunteers to put out a fire is absolutely forbidden unless judgment to do so is unquestionable and presents no possible danger to anyone present. In the event of a fire, an alarm will sound. Teachers are asked to lead children from the building through the nearest marked exit. Please stress the following rules:

- Absolutely no talking.
- Absolutely no running.
- Follow the teacher's lead.

4. Missing child

In the event that a child is missing, the hostess, director, or coordinator should be notified. The hostess should then notify the coordinator or director to continue the search, notify parents, or increase church awareness. All should remain calm and rational while moving in as timely a manner as possible.

5. Media response

In the event of a severe accident or death, it is likely that the media will be on site to cover the incident. It is important that all volunteers not say anything which could be mistaken or misquoted by the interviewer. A Watermark Board of Director member or their designee shall be the only persons to make any statement. If asked by a media member for a statement, please direct them to the Watermark Children's Ministry Director or any member of the Board of Directors.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Volunteers must follow these guidelines in notification of parents:

1. When to pull a parent

A parent should be called from the auditorium by the Hostess, Coordinator, or Director in the event that the child is completely inconsolable (after ten minutes of care) or a danger to himself or other children.

2. Teacher initiated discipline issue

In the event of a teacher initiated discipline situation, the teacher should contact the coordinator and set up a time to discuss the incident. The coordinator will then notify the parent to discuss the appropriate action to be taken regarding the incident. It is left to the coordinator's judgment to bring in the teacher to further discuss the incident and appropriate measures to be taken.

DISCIPLINE

Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation and encouragement is always encouraged. The Director or Coordinator shall advise volunteers on the best age appropriate discipline methods.

Follow these rules for discipline:

1. Consistency

Maintain consistency in handling discipline problems. Discipline must be consistent to be effective. Do not threaten a consequence unless you intend to follow through. At the beginning of class, remind your class of the guidelines.

2. Response

Make a prompt and personal response to inappropriate behavior. Correct a behavior the first time and every time.

3. Resolution

Seek both a resolution and reconciliation.

4. Reward

Acknowledge and reward positive behavior. Encourage children who are behaving and following the rules.

5. Plan

Plan your lessons thoroughly. Often the best deterrent to a discipline policy is a well-planned class.

6. Pray

Pray for your kids and your patience consistently. Ask the Lord to guide you throughout the class.

7. Discipline Steps

If discipline is warranted, it is appropriate for you to place the child in “time out” away from the center of class activity (but still in the classroom). (One minute per year of age.)

Discuss the infraction with the child and remind the child that he/she needs to be obedient.

CLASS SIZE/RATIO

Watermark will adhere to these class size ratios:

For infants:

- ✓ One volunteer to every two infants.

For toddlers:

- ✓ One volunteer to every four toddlers.

For two and three year olds:

- ✓ One volunteer to every five children

For four and five year olds and kindergarten:

- ✓ One volunteer to every seven children

On Your Mark:

- ✓ One volunteer to every ten children.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing education is an important, effective, and required step in fulfilling your responsibility as a volunteer.

1. Vision Night

Each new volunteer shall attend one informational meeting regarding his/her area of ministry.

2. Training

Each volunteer shall attend at least one training session a year to increase his/her skills and knowledge in his/her area of ministry with Watermark staff. Each teacher shall attend two training sessions a year to increase his/her skills and knowledge in his/her area of ministry with Watermark staff.

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Volunteer Acknowledgment

This Children's Ministry Handbook and Policy and Procedure Manual contains important information about Watermark Community Church. I understand that I should consult the Director of Children's Ministry if I have any questions that are not answered in the handbook.

I also acknowledge that revisions to the handbook may occur at any time.

My signature below acknowledges that I have received and read this entire handbook, including, but not only, the sections on:

- ✓ Child Abuse Reporting and Investigation
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Emergency Procedures
- ✓ Discipline
- ✓ Appropriate/Inappropriate Touch

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Director of Children's Ministry

Date