



Fellowship Memphis Child Protection Policy

Fellowship Memphis desires to be a safe and secure place for ministry to all children, youth and adults who attend or participate in activities. Jesus Christ sets the standard for relationships when He says: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and most important commandment. The next is like it: ‘Love your neighbor like yourself.’ All the Law and Prophets depend on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

As reflected in these policies and procedures, Fellowship Memphis desires to do the following:

1. Provide a safe and secure place where children and youth can grow in faith and share Christ’s love.
2. Build parental confidence in our ministry and programs.
3. Educate church leaders and Ministry Team Members with children and youth about prevention of abuse or accidental injury.
4. Encourage and enlist church leaders and Ministry Team Members to develop procedures and practices that prioritize the safety and well-being of children and youth.
5. Prepare Ministry Team Members to be proactive in their approach to keep children safe, giving them specifics about healthy interactions so that they are above reproach.

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies is not meant to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to demonstrate its love and compassion more fully for children and youth in genuine relationships. Relationships in ministry should always be experienced as caring, without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This policy is intended to help Fellowship Memphis create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them.

SELECTION OF MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS

All persons who desire to serve with children or youth must have been attending Fellowship Memphis for at least 3 months and complete an application:

<https://fellowshipmemphis.churchcenter.com/people/forms/246052>

All persons seeking to work with children must submit an application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, involvement at Fellowship Memphis, reference, and the disclosure of any previous

criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Fellowship Memphis.

Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two (2) of the applicant's references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Fellowship Memphis to the extent that the law requires.

Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a member of the Fellowship Memphis Staff team will meet with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

Background Check

Local, state, and national criminal checks are required for all team members. As part of the application, prospective Ministry Team Members will be asked for authorization allowing Fellowship Memphis to run these background screenings. If an individual declines to authorize a background screening, he or she will be unable to serve with children or youth. This background check may be re-run on every team member periodically beyond the initial screening.

Fellowship Memphis will never allow an individual who has any offense against children to work with children. Convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children, even if the event happened when the individual was a juvenile. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application will also be a disqualifying event. Any other conviction that has been disclosed will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by church staff.

Youth Team Members

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for team members who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children. The following guidelines apply to youth workers:

- a. Fellowship Kids Directors will complete two reference checks, preferably one with a parent, to ensure the Youth Team Member's skill and capacity.
- b. Whether or not a youth serves as a team member will be at the discretion of the Fellowship Kids Director and Fellowship Kids staff.
- c. All youth team members under age 17 must serve under the supervision of two adult team members.

- d. Youth will never be left alone with children and will not assist with diaper changes or in the restroom.
- e. If there is a need for a young child to be held, it must be while the youth is seated on the floor or in a chair (not standing).

Buddy Team Members

Team members who are a part of the Buddy Program provide care for children who find the classroom setting challenging due to physical or emotional needs.

- a. Buddy Team Members (also referred to as “Buddies”) are trained through a method of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children.
- b. Buddies will aid Lead Classroom Teachers and other Ministry Team Members by providing one-on-one support and care to children who need it.
- c. Children and youth may serve in the Buddy Program as a Buddy Intern. All interns must serve with an approved adult.

SAFETY MEASURES

The following safety measures set forth herein reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth, and Ministry Team Members participating in ministry activities.

Two Adult Policy

There should be a minimum of two adults in any room with children, except in the event of an emergency. Two related adults (e.g., husband and wife, father and daughter, etc.) are considered one adult under “Two Adult Policy.” The two related people may serve together, but a third person must also be present.

If a Ministry Team Member is alone in a classroom when children begin arriving, such team member shall ask a parent or caregiver to stay with his or her child in the classroom until another team member can arrive.

Adult: Child Ratio Policy

Listed below are the recommended adult to child ratios according to age group.

Age Group	Adult: Child Ratio
Infant (younger than 12 months)	1 adult per every 2 infants
Young toddler (1–2 years)	1 adult per every 3 young toddlers

Age Group	Adult: Child Ratio
Older toddler (2–3 years)	1 adult per every 4 older toddlers
Preschooler (4–5 years)	1 adult per every 5 preschoolers
School age	1 adult per every 10 school age child

*All youth helpers will count as “half ratio”. For ex: if the ratio is 1:4, it will be 1 youth helper per every 2 children.

Open Door Policy

All interactions with children should be visible and interruptible. Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Restroom Policy

Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class. For restroom visits during class time, children should only use restrooms in the Fellowship Kids Hallway.

Fellowship Kids team members should:

- a. Escort children down the hall and go as a group if possible. If an isolated restroom visit must happen, the Lead Classroom Teacher or Classroom Helper must confirm another trained adult is aware and in the area. This adult can monitor the restroom or classroom.
- b. Check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside.
- c. Remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

Kindergarten – 5th graders should not need any adult assistance during a restroom visit. If any child requires assistance, a female worker may assist the child, making sure that another adult is outside the restroom. For the protection of all, Fellowship Kids team members must never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

Restrooms on the kid’s hall are considered “family restrooms”. They are for the use of children in Fellowship Kids classes and parents taking their own children to use the restroom/change diapers. Please direct other individuals to use alternate restrooms.

Diaper Changing

Children in the nursery will have their diaper changed, as needed, by a female worker. For the protection of all, workers must never be alone with a child while changing a diaper. Step by step instructions for diaper changes are provided in training materials.

Injuries

If a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- a. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, Ministry Team Members will provide First Aid and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- b. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond basic First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called in addition to a volunteer medical professional listed on the Fellowship *Kids Contact List*.
- c. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an Incident Report will be completed for all major and minor incidents.
- d. It is the responsibility of the Lead Classroom Teacher (LCT) to complete an Incident Report for all major and minor incidents that occur in their classroom. The Incident Report is then submitted to a Fellowship Kids Director for filing and submission to the Campus Pastor. In the absence of Fellowship Kids Director, these responsibilities are resumed by a Fellowship Kids Coordinator.
- e. The Fellowship Memphis *Incident Report Form* should be completed within 24 hours of the incidence occurrence.
- f. The Fellowship Kids Director will complete a courtesy call to the parent and/or guardian of the injured child in the days following the incident. In the absence of Fellowship Kids Director, these responsibilities are resumed by a Fellowship Kids Coordinator.

Firearms

All adult volunteers, teachers and staff working with children and youth are prohibited from carrying firearms of any kind on the premises for the duration of the event.

Photo Sharing

Photos or videos of children's faces taken during Fellowship Memphis activities must only be used online if photo permission has been granted from a parent or guardian via the form below.

<https://fellowshipmemphis.churchcenter.com/people/forms/427291>

General

All adult volunteers, teachers, and staff working with children and youth are required to complete the Team Member screening and selection process as defined by this policy.

1. Persons who have been convicted of, placed on probation for, received pretrial diversion for, pleaded guilty or no contest for, or are currently charged with prohibited offense

shall not serve in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth. Prohibited offense includes any crime against a child or any offense involving sexual conduct, physical abuse, violence or threatened violence, or such other felony or crime involving moral turpitude as determined by the church staff.

2. Ministry Team Members will complete training activities appropriate to their ministry involvement.
3. Fellowship Memphis Staff will determine the appropriate number of Ministry Team Members necessary for any activity involving children, but no fewer than two team members will be present for any activity.
4. Ministry Team Members must remain at each activity until all children have been picked up by a parent or guardian.
5. All programs, events, and activities for children will comply with the applicable written ministry procedures.

Medical

1. A First Aid kit must be available and maintained.
2. All Fellowship Kids Directors and Fellowship Kids Coordinators must be CPR certified. CPR certification is recommended but not required for Lead Classroom Teachers. This certification documentation will be maintained and updated by the Fellowship Kids Director.
3. If available at the campus, 2 – 3 volunteer medical professionals within the congregation should be listed on the *Fellowship Kids Contact List*. It is the responsibility of the Fellowship Kids Director to maintain an up-to-date list of these volunteers.
4. Information on dietary restrictions and allergies must be indicated on family registration forms and security name tags.

Interactions Between Children and Adults

Interactions between children and adults should always be out in the open, observable, and interruptible. Caring for children in a healthy way often involves statements of praise and encouragement, handshakes, and high-fives, and even hugs initiated by the child. With Nursery-aged children, it is simply part of quality care to hold them in laps or hold their hand as they walk down the hall.

However, these interactions should never be at the exclusion of other children or in isolation. Team members are periodically trained on Best Practices for specific appropriate and inappropriate interactions.

If any questionable interactions are witnessed between a childcare worker and a child, this must be reported.

1. Questionable interactions should be reported within 24 hours of the occurrence to the Fellowship Kids Director. In the absence of the Fellowship Kids Director, the witness should report to the Campus Pastor.
2. The Fellowship Kids Director must request the Fellowship Memphis *Incident Report Form* be completed by the reporter of the incident. The Fellowship Kids Director will submit that incident report to the Campus Pastor.
3. The Campus Pastor will notify the parents that an incident report has been submitted concerning their minor.
4. Questionable interactions may result in the dismissal of that individual from working with children at Fellowship Memphis.

IN THE CASE OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

1. *Physical abuse* – physical abuse means the infliction of injury by intentional or non-accidental actions or inactions.
2. *Emotional abuse* – consistent, chronic behavior by a parent or caretaker that has a harmful effect on the child. It involves a pattern of attitudes or acts that are detrimental to the child’s development of a sound and healthy personality. Emotional abuse is the infliction of mental or emotional injury.
3. *Neglect* – the failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver or parent to provide for that child’s basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision.
4. *Sexual abuse* – any sexual act used for the sexual stimulation of the child, perpetrator or another person that is carried out with a child. It would also be considered sexual abuse if the abuse is committed by a person under the age of 18 but who is older than the victim, or when the abuser is in a position of power or control over another child or uses force or coercion. Both males and females can be victims.

If an individual involved in the care of children at Fellowship Memphis becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to

the Fellowship Kids Director. All Ministry Team Members must follow the guidelines outlined in *Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse* section below.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

Report any suspicions of child abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or psychological abuse) to the Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237- 0004 immediately. Reports can be made anonymously.

According to Tennessee law ALL persons must report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Any Ministry Team Member who becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect must immediately report this case to authorities and complete the Fellowship Memphis *Incident Report Form*. Incident reports should be given to the Fellowship Kids Director and/or Campus Pastor. Any case of suspected child abuse will then be investigated by outside authorities as defined by state law.

- a. If a child reports any alleged abuse to a Ministry Team Member, whoever the child reports the alleged abuse to is the person responsible for making a report. *TCA 37-1-403*
- b. Individuals do not have to have proof of the abuse to make a report, just that they “suspect.”

- c. What will the Tennessee Department of Children Services ask?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child’s name• Grade• Age• Date of Birth• Sex• Race | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child’s Address• Names of Parents/Guardians• Telephone numbers including home, work, and cell numbers of both parents, if applicable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Siblings in the home and if so, what are the ages?• Witnesses to the abuse, if applicable• Details of what the child told you. |
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- d. Ministry Team Members should NOT:

- Take pictures of the alleged abuse.
- Ask children to remove clothing.
- Ask for specific details or investigate.
- Talk about the incident with others.

If an incident of child abuse is alleged to have occurred at Fellowship Memphis or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. Ministry Team Members and Fellowship Memphis will comply with the Tennessee requirement regarding mandatory reporting of abuse. Reports of abuse will be made to the Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004. Fellowship Memphis will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by the appropriate authorities.

2. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified within 24 hours after a report to the authorities has been made, unless the parent or guardian is the alleged perpetrator.
3. Any worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
4. Fellowship Memphis will complete an *Incident Report Form* and maintain any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations. These documents will also be shared with law enforcement for the purpose of their independent investigation.
5. Fellowship Memphis will have one spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse, which shall not be the person that was alleged to be involved. Leadership at Fellowship Memphis will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. The alleged perpetrator will be dismissed from working with children and youth at the discretion of the church staff.

Disclosure of Policy

The Fellowship Memphis Child Protection Policy shall be available online on the Fellowship Memphis website.

Revision of Policy

This policy will be regularly reviewed and can be modified. Any such modification shall be noted on the Fellowship Memphis website.

Definitions

Ministry Team Member: The term “team member” refers to any volunteers or paid staff who are caring for, teaching, and/or working with children (e.g. directors, coordinators, lead classroom teachers, classroom helpers, small group leaders, buddies etc.)

Youth: The term “youth” refers to any person from 6th grade through 18 years of age.

Child: The term “child” refers to any children from birth through 5th grade.

Last Updated: August 2022

MINISTRY TEAM MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

1. Ministry Team Members agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
2. Ministry Team Members agree to not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
3. Ministry Team Members agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in this policy.
4. Ministry Team Members agree to comply with the guidelines for appropriate interactions with children and youth.
5. If Ministry Team Members observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children, Ministry Team Members agree to immediately report their observations.
6. Ministry Team Members understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

I have read and agree to comply with the Fellowship Memphis Child Protection Policy.

Name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____