

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 more fully demonstrate its love and compassion 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.quickapp.pro>).

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 employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Fellowship Memphis.

b) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least three (3) 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.

c) 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.

d) 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 teenage workers:

- Youth over the age of 16 must consent to a background screening as detailed above.
- Whether or not a youth serves as a team member will be at the discretion of the Outpost Kids Director and Fellowship Kids staff.
- Youth must serve under the supervision of a parent, **as well as another adult** (not the other parent).
- Youth will never be left alone with children and will not assist with diaper changes or in the restroom.
- 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).

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

A minimum of two adults will be in attendance at all times when children are in our care. If a Fellowship Kids 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 Fellowship Kids team member can arrive.

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:

1. Escort children down the hall and go as a group if possible. If an isolated restroom visit must happen, the responsible adult must make sure another child's teacher, volunteer, or staff member is aware and in the area.
2. Check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside.
3. 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 a child under the age of five 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

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

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.

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.

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. Information on dietary restrictions and allergies must be indicated on family registration forms and security name tags.

Healthy 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 to the Outpost Kids Director, who will notify the parents, and may result in the dismissal of that individual from working with children at Fellowship Memphis.

What to Do 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:

- **Physical abuse** – physical abuse means the infliction of injury by intentional or non-accidental actions or inactions.
- **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.

- **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.

In the event that 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 Outpost Kids Director. Upon consultation with Fellowship Memphis staff, the Outpost Kids Director shall then take appropriate action.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse

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.

All ministry team members must immediately report and document any case of suspected child sexual abuse, which will then be investigated by outside authorities as defined by state law. Report any suspicion of child abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, or psychological abuse) to the Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline at **1-877-237-0004** immediately.

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or 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.
3. 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.
4. Fellowship Memphis will complete an incident report 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, 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.

Ministry Team Member Expectations

- Ministry team members agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Ministry team members agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Ministry team members agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in this policy.
- Ministry team members agree to comply with the guidelines for appropriate interactions with children and youth.

- In the event that ministry team members observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children, ministry team members agree to immediately report their observations.
- 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: _____