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## **HOPE CHURCH CHILD SAFETY PROCEDURES**

Hope Church endeavors to provide children and youth with Gospel-centered programs that are safe, fun, and engaging. The policies below are to be followed during all events for children from birth through high school.

### **Children's Ministry Staff & Volunteers**

- All volunteers in Children or Youth Ministries must fill out an application and review these procedures.
- All staff and volunteers in Children or Youth Ministries must have a background check before serving. The only exception to this rule is a "first serve" activity where a volunteer is trying out the ministry for the first time. In this case, a "first serve" must involve another adult who has had a background check serving alongside the volunteer. Background checks are repeated every 3 years.
- Generally, volunteers in Children & Youth Ministries must be mature enough to engage in the ministry and supervision of children. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be supervised by an adult.
- All volunteers should wear an identification lanyard or nametag.

### **Supervision**

- All children should remain in designated areas of the church for a particular activity.
- Two staff members or volunteers should be present with children through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at all times. For children 4<sup>th</sup> grade and higher, a single staff member or volunteer can teach or lead a group as long as other ministries are occurring in the same area of the building.
- No child should be alone with only one adult at any time.
- No children under the age of 18 should be left to roam the building alone or unsupervised.

### **Restroom Procedures**

- Two adults should be in the room or within sight any time a diaper is being changed.
- Younger children through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade who need to use the restroom should be accompanied by an adult when they leave the classroom. As much as possible, men should take boys to the restroom and women should take girls to the restroom in groups with 2 or more children.
- Children should be allowed to go into the restroom alone. The adult should stand outside with the door ajar. If a child needs assistance, the door should remain propped open completely.
- A man should never enter a restroom with a girl unless there is a medical/physical emergency and no one else is immediately available.
- Children 4<sup>th</sup> grade and higher can be allowed to leave a classroom to use the restroom alone, but they should return to the classroom in a reasonable period of time and not remain unsupervised.
- To minimize disruption and the need for individual children to leave a classroom during an activity, an organized group restroom break may be helpful.
- If there is an emergency, the parent will be called. 911 will also be called in a medical/physical emergency.

### Check-In Procedures

- All children through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be checked in and given a name tag to wear.
- Parents/caregivers of children through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be given a duplicate tag upon check-in which will serve as identification when picking up children. Children will be released upon presentation of this tag by the parent/caregiver. We will assume that a person in possession of this tag has been given permission by the parent/caregiver to pick up their children. This applies to an older sibling.

### Photos

- Pictures are not to be taken of children. The only exception to this policy is when parents have given permission and staff or a specific volunteer has been asked to take pictures.

### Physical Touch/Affection

- Showing affection appropriately is important to making children feel safe, welcomed, and loved. Physical affection should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love.
  - Physical affection should be brief and only when other adults are present.
  - Preteen or older children should be hugged only from the side.
  - Below are some examples of other appropriate forms of physical touch. All should be brief and limited.
    - Occasionally, it is normal to get down to a child's level and lightly hold them by their shoulders to get their attention when trying to direct or correct them. Avoid over-restraining a child.
    - Placing a hand high on a child's back to guide them is sometimes natural and helpful.
    - Holding or hugging a child when they are upset or injured also shows love and care if done appropriately.
- Avoid physically restraining a child. It should only be done if they are in danger of harming themselves or others. If restraint is necessary, it should be done with minimal force to prevent harm until a parent can be present. Move other children away from the area for their safety.

### Reporting Suspected Abuse

- Below are some general guidelines for how best to handle a suspected abuse case.
  - If a child is in immediate danger, the police should be called immediately (for example, obvious physical abuse, being left alone overnight, etc.).
  - In all cases, the person who hears of the abuse should contact staff leadership immediately. Together, they should discuss appropriate steps and, when possible, staff leadership should take the lead in collecting further information or reporting the issue to authorities.
  - The State of Iowa does not require that licensed, ordained ministers or volunteers report suspected child abuse. They are considered "permissive reporters" and are encouraged to report suspected abuse when they have reasonable cause to believe it has occurred.
  - We are not criminal investigators. If it seems possible that abuse has or is occurring, the staff leader should contact the proper authorities immediately to report the situation.