

ALWAYS VISIBLE, NEVER ALONE.

I. Always Visible, Never Alone.

- A. All doors should be propped open unless the door has a full window pane in the top (as do the office doors). These windows should remain uncovered at all times. Always remain within open sight of other adults.¹
- B. Two adults (minimum) or an adult and two youth should be present with children at all times, even if only one child remains in the group.
- C. A Service Coordinator (SC) will be available in the hallway during both church services, classes, and events should you need assistance getting supplies, finding parents, sending children to the restroom (see “Restroom Policies”), or with other needs. The SC will be based at the Children’s Check-In area.

II. Youth Assistants

- A. Eligible teens have completed 6th grade, are under 16 years old and serve with expressed parent/guardian permission.
- B. Youth assistants should remain in the room (with adults) or with the class from the start of service until the end of service. *(This will require any restroom or other breaks to be taken before the service begins or after it ends, and will preclude these assistants from running any errands during the service time.)*
- C. Youth assistants will not change diapers or escort children to the restroom.
- D. Youth assistants will not carry children or hold them in their laps unless directly asked to do so by an adult on duty.

III. Restroom Policies

- A. Volunteers must avoid going into the bathroom with a child if at all possible. If an adult must go in, prop the door open and notify another adult as to where you are, who is with you, and why (e.g. a child is ill).
- B. Diaper changing
 - 1. Should be done according to the policies posted on the wall above each changing table.
 - 2. Should occur only on the three changing tables located in Rooms 9a, 9b, and 10a.
 - 3. Should be done by an adult volunteer (female whenever possible) or staff member.
- C. Using restrooms found in classrooms (Rooms 9b, 10a, and 10b)
 - 1. Children should go to the bathroom alone as much as possible, with verbal assistance from the adult volunteer and with door open.
 - 2. Because toddlers are curious the door may need to be closed, so windows are built into these doors. If door must be closed, a female adult should assist the child in the restroom, and another adult must be present and aware of the situation.

¹ In this policy, “adults” are defined as anyone age 16 or older.

- D. Restroom use for children younger than Kindergarten
 - 1. 3-5 year olds (in classrooms 7, 8, or 10) should use the Children's Restrooms located to the east of Room 8, near the Infant Room.
 - 2. Restroom doors should be propped slightly open with a doorstop when in use, with teachers remaining outside the restrooms unless help is required inside. If additional help is needed, the teacher should prop the door fully open.
 - 3. Teachers should either:
 - a) take the entire class to the restrooms at once, with children lined up in the hallway, or
 - b) notify the Service Coordinator, who will either assist the child or take your place in class until you have returned from doing so.
- E. Restroom use for K-4th graders
 - 1. Teachers should take the entire class to the restroom whenever possible, with the restroom door should propped open and adults in plain sight.
 - a) Children should take turns a few at a time so that no one is in a classroom alone and so the restroom doesn't become overly crowded.
 - b) If it becomes necessary for an adult to enter the restroom, leave the door open and notify another adult as to where you are.
 - 2. If a child needs to use the restroom during class, notify the Service Coordinator.
 - a) The SC will monitor the child from one point in the hallway while one of the classroom teachers stands in their doorway, able to watch both the hall and the classroom.
 - b) The SC can provide further help as needed. At all times, both adults are visible and the child's location is clear.
- F. Children in 5th grade may go to the restroom alone if necessary.
 - 1. Children are encouraged to use the restrooms before or after service.
 - 2. During services, they are to use the restroom in the children's hallway.

IV. Appropriate Touch

- A. Appropriate physical contact varies according to the age of the child. Holding, rocking, sitting in laps, diapering, assisting with the potty, hugging for extended periods of time, rubbing backs and heads are all appropriate in many situations with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, but are typically not appropriate for school-aged children.
- B. Sitting on laps is most often only appropriate for ages birth through 4; it is not often appropriate for older children. It should not be necessary to pick up or hold older children unless injured or in distress.
- C. In some situations, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children. Men should typically not assist with restroom issues for children at any age, though they may walk a child to the restroom and wait outside the door.
- D. Only touch children in "safe" areas and for brief times, with no rubbing or massaging. "Safe" areas generally include hands, feet, arms, shoulders, or upper back. Never touch a child on or near any region that is considered private or personal (on any part of the body that swimsuit covers), unless changing diapers or assisting nursery children with restroom needs.

- E. Ask children's permission before hugging them, and take care to note any discomfort they may express with appropriate physical contact, allowing children personal space as needed, and never indicating frustration in their not wanting to participate in a high five or other innocent physical touch.
- F. Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is never an appropriate way for Grace staff or volunteers to correct a child.

V. Additional Child Protection Policies

A. Family members and friends

- 1. Anyone who accompanies volunteers during their turn to serve must be approved by Children's Ministry Staff. This includes children over the age of 10, friends, relatives, spouses, or any others who are not currently regular Children's Ministry Volunteers or caregiver staff.
- 2. If someone is interested in serving regularly, he or she should meet with staff to be trained and screened before serving.

B. Taking Pictures

- 1. Do not take pictures of Grace children with personal cameras, cell phones, or any other personal property without explicit permission from Grace Staff.
- 2. Do not post photos including faces of children at Grace on social media or other publicly accessible places.
- 3. If photos are needed for a project, speak with Children's Ministry Staff ahead of time to request approval. Staff will collect parental approval and will take, approve, and share the photos as the situation dictates.

VI. Reporting

- A. If you observe an adult talking or acting in a manner that seems to be innocent but might appear to others to be inappropriate, bring the behavior to the adult's attention and assist in correcting it. Also, notify Children's Ministry Staff.
- B. If you observe Church Staff, a children's ministry volunteer, or anyone talking or acting in a manner that creates suspicion of improper involvement, or the potential for improper involvement, promptly report your concern to Children's Ministry Staff who will take appropriate corrective measures. Behaviors may include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of minors.
 - 2. Deliberate engagement with sexually explicit material.
 - 3. Excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child or youth, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child.
 - 4. Harsh treatment or severe neglect of a child.
- C. If you suspect that a child has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused:
 - 1. report it immediately. If you are a mandatory reporter due to your occupation or other commitments, of course do so. If you need assistance in doing this, Children's Ministry Staff can assist you with the process.
 - 2. Whether or not you are a mandatory reporter, please also report the incident to a Grace Staff member.

3. *Do not* talk to the suspect to attempt to substantiate allegations or suspicions. Let the authorities do this.
 4. *Do not* be afraid to report. We are responsible as a church community to comply with the law and cooperate with efforts to protect our children.
 5. *Do not* discuss the situation with anyone other than the proper authorities and Grace Staff. This could compromise investigation and/or further harm the victim.
- D. If a child discloses abuse to you, listen well and then report immediately to the appropriate legal authorities and/or a Grace Staff member. *A child who discloses abuse is almost never lying.*
1. Assure the child that he/she is safe and that you will help him/her.
 2. Do not interrupt the child to come find a staff member or to contact authorities. Listen attentively until he/she is done talking.
 3. Do not ask clarifying questions as this can create confusion for the child.
 4. After reporting the conversation, document all that was said and give this report to a staff member and the appropriate authorities.
 5. This information will remain confidential, once reported.

VII.Resources

- A. Tchividjian, Basyle. "Protecting Children from Abuse in the Church: Steps to Prevent and Respond." Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2013. Print.
- B. Reju, Deepak. On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church. Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2014. Print.
- C. www.netgrace.org
- D. Holcomb, Justin and Lindsey. God Made All of Me. Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2015. Print.