Grace Bible Church Child Protection Policy for the Nursery Departments

Introduction

The Bible teaches us that God loves and values children. When his disciples tried to send the children away, Jesus welcomed them and loved them.

In Mark 10:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.

It is our desire to bring children to the Lord Jesus. We desire to do all that we can to create and maintain a safe and welcoming atmosphere in which to care for our children and show God’s wonderful love through our Christ-like actions.

Since we recognize that we are a reflection of God’s love to those in our care, we take seriously our responsibility to them. This policy is written to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children to the Savior.

We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide the highest quality care in our children's nurseries. This policy is designed to protect and promote growth for each child and approved worker involved.

Everyone who teaches, helps or cares for nursery children on the premises or facilities of Grace Bible Church, or in the ministries or activities of Grace Bible Church, must follow these policies and procedures.

This Child Protection Policy represents the minimum requirements applicable to the nurseries of Grace Bible Church.

This policy applies to church-provided nurseries.

I. Definitions

Approved Worker: an individual who has completed the Application for Service and has been approved for service at Grace Bible Church by a pastor.

Nursery Child: an infant or child cared for in one of the nurseries.

Adult: a person age eighteen or over.

II. Facility Precautions

A. Interior windows provide easy viewing by parents and personnel. The windows have one-way view film application so there is no disruption of order within the nurseries.

B. All doors, with the exception of hallway public restrooms, have windows. Sight lines will remain unobstructed at all times. In-class bathrooms are provided with windows on the bathroom doors, which enable the approved worker to assist the nursery child, if needed, and still be within view of other workers. The in-class bathrooms are for use by the children only.

C. The doors to bathrooms in the nurseries cannot be locked from the inside.

D. The church has installed specially designed areas for diaper changing in the nurseries. These areas are in full view of the classroom. Any approved worker, whether paid or volunteer, must use these special diaper changing areas in full view of the classroom whenever changing a child’s diaper.

E. A nursery sleeping room is provided with an unobstructed window and with one-way film application.
III. Child Security

A. Nursery infants or nursery children should never be admitted to the classroom without at least one approved worker present. Generally, supervision will be provided 10 minutes before the service begins.

B. Parents or parent-authorized adult (e.g. grandparent, aunt, etc.) must sign a sheet when admitting a child to the nursery. The parent or parent-authorized adult must sign the child out before leaving.

IV. Staffing

Grace Bible Church exercises care in recruiting and selecting nursery workers Therefore:

A. Each nursery must have a team of two approved workers, one of which must be an adult.

B. Teen helpers, ages 14-17, will complete screening and obtain approval from the Youth Pastor before serving in the nurseries. Teen helpers will always work under the direct supervision of an approved adult worker.

C. Approved workers will have completed a screening process which includes regular attendance at Grace Bible Church for at least six months (exceptions may be granted by a pastor) and will also have completed the Application for Service form.

D. It is the responsibility of the Grace Bible Church Nursery Chairperson to:
   • Obtain a properly completed and signed application form from the applicant.
   • Inform the applicant that he/she is approved for service as an approved worker and notify all who need to know of his/her approval. If the applicant is not approved, a staff pastor will inform the applicant and others only on a “need to know” basis.

E. A Grace Bible Church pastoral staff member will review the application and “red flag” any concerns. The staff member will then investigate and document the findings. Applicants who are approved will be given to the Nursery Committee Chairperson so that the worker can begin to serve.

F. Grace Bible Church reserves the right to conduct a Background Character Verification from the Illinois Department of Health and Social Services and a criminal background check through the Illinois Department of Justice Crime Information Bureau on volunteers.

G. Those who volunteer for special events or temporary service (such as last minute substitute, special services, etc.) will be required to fill out the Temporary Service Form in the classroom. These workers will always work under the supervision of approved workers.

H. Nursery Committee members, ushers or pastors will observe the nurseries on a random and unannounced basis.

I. If a class is unexpectedly short-staffed, the following steps will be taken:
   • Two classes may be combined, if practical, in order to meet the staffing requirements. A notice will be posted for parents as to where to pick up their children.
   • If combining classes is not an appropriate option, a parent will be asked to stay in order to meet the staffing guidelines before additional children will be admitted to the nursery. If the parent is not an approved worker, they will have to sign the Temporary Service Form in the nursery. The approved worker will assume supervisory responsibility and inform the parent of pertinent policies (for example, the bathroom policy).
   • Nursery programs without adequate staffing will not commence. Additionally, programs which continually experience staffing deficiencies will be subject to review (by the C.E. Board) and possible cancellation.
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V. Proper Display of Affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine and positive displays of God’s love:

Hugs: one-arm side hugs or hand-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body to body hugs, or kisses.

Lap Sitting: appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children four and younger.

VI. Discipline

All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child’s dignity and fragile life. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training and correction. Physical punishment will not be used. No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort will be used.

Nursery children may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive nursery children may be removed from the group to another part of the room. If the disruptive behavior persists, the parents may be asked to come and sit with the child.

Certain actions are not allowed by nursery workers with nursery children. These include, but are not limited to:

Physical: strike, shake, slap
Verbal/Mental abuse: humiliate, degrade, threaten
Sexual abuse: inappropriate touching and exposure

VII. Reporting Violations

All volunteer and paid leaders of Grace Bible Church involved with children in the nurseries shall immediately report any violation of this policy or items of obvious concern relating to child abuse or neglect of which they have knowledge or have observed within the scope of their duties to a Grace Bible Church pastor. The list of physical and sexual abuse signs is found in the Grace Bible Church Guide to Recognizing Abuse brochure, which is distributed to all workers. Using this as a guide, the occurrence of suspected child abuse or neglect shall be reported. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. If the violation is reported by the child, affirm to the child by taking their word seriously. Listen carefully and remember their protection is the church’s first priority.

Use the Grace Bible Church Suspicion of Child Abuse Report Form, which can be obtained from a Grace Bible Church pastor. Fill out the report form and sign it in the presence of a pastor within 24 hours of the suspected incident or observation.

At all time this report shall remain confidential. Do not speak of your suspicions to anyone but the Grace Bible Church pastor to whom the suspected abuse was reported.