

# **Child Protection Policy 1.3**

---

Geist Community Church

01/2019

## Table of Contents<sup>1</sup>

<b><u>Staff and Volunteer Expectations</u></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><u>Child Protection</u></b> .....	<b>1</b>
Parameters for the Child Protection Policy .....	1
Personnel Summary .....	1
<b><u>Protecting the Children Before They Arrive</u></b> .....	<b>2</b>
Screening Procedure.....	3
<b><u>Protecting the Children As They Arrive and Depart</u></b> .....	<b>3</b>
Arrival and Departure Times.....	3
Signing a Child in to Children’s Ministry .....	4
Parental Authentication Identification System .....	4
Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation .....	4
<b><u>Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care</u></b> .....	<b>5</b>
Two-Volunteer Rule .....	5
Visibility .....	5
Check-In Monitors.....	5
Volunteer-to-Child Ratios .....	5
Diaper Changing and Restroom Procedure.....	6
Appropriate Discipline.....	6
Physical Touch Policy .....	7
Food and Drink Policy .....	8
Alternate Locations .....	9
Security and Emergency Response .....	9
<b><u>Healthy Child Policy</u></b> .....	<b>11</b>
Communicable Disease Policy .....	11
Children with Special Needs Policy .....	12
Universal Precautions .....	12
<b><u>Neglect &amp; Abuse Prevention, Reporting &amp; Response</u></b> .....	<b>13</b>
Definitions .....	13
Prevention .....	13
Reporting of Neglect & Abuse .....	14
Response to Neglect & Abuse .....	16
<b><u>APPENDIX 1: Inappropriate and Appropriate Touch</u></b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 2: Geist Community Church Child Abuse Reporting Form</u></b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 3: Child Abuse &amp; Neglect Reporting Guidelines in Indiana</u></b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 4: Geist Community Church Incident Report Form</u></b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 5: Geist Community Church Minor/Parent(s) Agreement Form</u></b> .....	<b>22</b>

---

<sup>1</sup> This policy was adapted with permission from the Child Protection Policy of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Their Child Protection Policy can be found at <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/ministries/children/child-protection-policy/>

## **Staff and Volunteer Expectations**

All children's ministry volunteers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct
- Ministering to and caring for the children
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God.

## **Child Protection**

Our first concern is that children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- Screen all children's ministry volunteers and church staff by requiring a written application, by contacting at least one reference, by requiring them to pass our Child Protection Policy Quiz, and (for adults) by utilizing a third party company to perform background checks at the local, state, and national levels
- Require training for children's ministry adult volunteers and youth helpers
- Educate our staff and volunteers to recognize suspected child abuse and to require them to understand and follow the reporting laws and to encourage them to report suspected abuse
- Adhere to a two-volunteers-per-room policy
- Employ scheduling procedures and volunteer/child ratios that optimize safety
- Utilize Check-In Monitor volunteers to promote and maintain safety in the children's hall
- Equip each room with a first aid kit
- Adhere to a healthy child policy to limit the spread of contagious sickness
- Maintain 24/7 closed-circuit cameras in every room where children are overseen and throughout GCC's building.
- Have large windows in every room where children are highly visible to those not in a classroom

### **Parameters for the Child Protection Policy**

This child protection policy applies to children (from birth to 5th grade) who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of the church for the church's public worship services or specific children's ministry-related church-sponsored activities (i.e. parenting and marriage seminars, bible studies held at the church with accompanying childcare, Vacation Bible School, Backyard Bible Club). Any form of abuse, harm, neglect or other problems related to children at home, school, or in any bible-study, activity, or venue not directly related to children's ministry at GCC is not covered by this policy.

### **Personnel Summary**

*Adults* are individuals 18 years or older

*Minors* are individuals under 18 years of age.

*Children* are individuals 12 years old and under.

*Children Helpers* are those under the age of 12 who assist in some area of children’s ministry alongside adults. Child Helpers do not count as a volunteer in the volunteer-to-child ratios, and they are not required to complete a criminal background check or pass the Child Protection Policy Quiz. However, both the child helper and the parent(s) are required to sign a volunteer agreement (see Appendix 5) due to how the parent’s share in the responsibility for ensuring that their child is present scheduled Sundays.

*Youth* are individuals between the ages of 13–17.

*Youth Helpers* are those between the ages of 13–17 who assist in some area of children’s ministry alongside an adult. Youth Helpers do count as a volunteer in the volunteer-to-child ratios—provided that they complete the “GCC Youth and Family Volunteer Application” and pass (with at least 80% correct) the Child Protection Policy quiz. Youth helpers are not required to complete a criminal background check. In addition, they and their parent(s) are required to sign a volunteer agreement (See Appendix 5) because parents share in the responsibility for ensuring that their youth helper is present on scheduled Sundays.

*Staff* are the paid employees of the church. All full-time church staff are required to receive a background check regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.

*Volunteers* are those who work with children while not employed for this specific task. All adult volunteers who serve in children’s ministry are required to complete a GCC Youth & Family Volunteer Application (which includes a thorough background check), and pass (with at least 80% correct) the Child Protection Policy quiz *before* they serve. Volunteers include team leaders, check-in monitors, teachers, helpers, coordinators, and anyone else who serves the children.

*Check-in Monitors* are adults who oversee the check-in and check-out procedure for children’s ministries. They oversee the hallway where the children’s ministry classrooms are, and they assist with bathroom breaks and communication with parents when children’s ministry is happening. All check-in monitors are required to complete a GCC Youth & Family Volunteer Application (which includes a thorough background check), and pass (with at least 80% correct) the Child Protection Policy quiz *before* they serve.

*Pastors/Elders* are officers of the church who serve the church by providing teaching and leadership to the congregation as a whole. They must go through both the children’s ministry screening and training procedures if they are to serve in children’s ministry, just like any other volunteer.

The *KidsQuest Coordinator* is an appointed individual who oversees KidsQuest under the broad oversight of the pastors/elders.

## **Protecting the Children Before They Arrive**

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday services. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children’s ministry is required to go through a screening process before they serve and to attend training as described below.

## **Screening Procedure**

To ensure safe and quality care, GCC has established a screening procedure to approve all volunteers to work with our children:

- All KidsQuest, nursery, and check-in volunteers must be members of GCC in good standing for at least *four months* in order to serve in this ministry. Rare exceptions may be approved only by the Associate Pastor overseeing children's ministries.
- Children Helpers who are at least one grade older than the children they are assisting are welcome to assist in KidsQuest (subject to the approval and direction of the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator).
- All adult volunteers must have completed and submitted the GCC Youth and Family Volunteer Application (including the criminal background check information) and be approved by the Associate Pastor overseeing children's ministries. At least one reference listed in the application will be contacted for corroboration.
- All adult and youth volunteers must pass (with at least 80% correct) the Child Protection Policy quiz *before* they serve.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- All adult volunteers must repeat the criminal background check every seven years.

GCC reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to: refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Any volunteer, helper, coordinator, staff or elder (or any GCC member) who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant must report that knowledge to the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator. If the misconduct involves child abuse or neglect, then by law this person also must disclose such information to the authorities. Anonymous reports are accepted by the authorities, and failure to make a report can be a Class B misdemeanor. Reports should be made to the statewide, centralized Indiana Hotline at 1-800-800-5556.

## **Protecting the Children As They Arrive and Depart**

### **Arrival and Departure Times**

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that they might be well prepared for the lesson and so that they might be ready to welcome children, and especially those dropped off early.

Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, volunteers will ask the check-in monitor to locate or call the parent(s).

## **Signing a Child in to Children's Ministry**

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry program will sign the child into the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives at the check-in desk, thereby granting permission for the child to participate in that GCC event or program. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Food and Drink" section below. Check-in and check-out of children applies to all children birth through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Children's ministry volunteers have the right to refuse any child at check-in. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the room being closed because the volunteer-child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children.

A parent or designated guardian must be in the church building at all times while their children are checked-in.

## **Parental Authentication Identification System**

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be signed into his/her class by a parent or guardian.

Only the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class is authorized to pick up the child. The exceptions to this are:

1. A member can send their spouse to pick up their children.
2. A member parent may make prior arrangements with the check-in monitor or the KidsQuest Coordinator to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.
3. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of an elder, coordinator, or staff member of GCC.
4. A member parent may make prior arrangements with the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator to allow his or her older child (late elementary school) to leave the children's ministry hall after a Sunday gathering.

## **Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation**

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the volunteers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator.

# **Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care**

## **Two-Volunteer Rule**

For all children’s programs, at least two qualified *volunteers* (who have passed the child protection policy quiz at 80% or above and who have turned in a completed “GCC Youth and Family Volunteer Application”) must be present in each classroom at all times (barring emergencies). If a volunteer needs something outside of a classroom, the Check-in Monitor can either retrieve what is needed or fill in the classroom while the volunteer does what is necessary outside the classroom.

A volunteer or helper must never leave a child alone in a classroom.

A staff member, coordinator, or volunteer may take children out of the nursery or classroom only for a compelling reason such as illness, emergency, evacuation, fieldtrip to the playground, or using the children’s bathroom—and only in accordance with this policy. Children are not permitted to leave their classroom for non-compelling reasons like getting a drink of water or a snack.

Staff or volunteers should not have private one-on-one meetings with a child. If a meeting on the church’s premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present, and held with the knowledge and consent of the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator and the child’s parent(s).

## **Visibility**

When children’s classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

## **Check-In Monitors**

The check-in monitor is a qualified male or female volunteer whose duties are not limited to any one classroom. At the beginning of a session check-in monitors help parents with check-in, and during a session they watch for any unusual activity and help out volunteers (e.g., locating parents, helping a child to the bathroom [only female volunteers], or even substituting temporarily in a classroom when necessary). A check-in monitor is on duty during Sunday morning gatherings.

## **Volunteer-to-Child Ratios**

In addition to always having at least two qualified volunteers present, the following ratios are maintained during the regularly scheduled Sunday morning meetings of the church:

- Children ages 0–23 months: One adult or youth for every three children (Nursery)
- Children ages 2–3 (24–35 months): One adult or youth for every four children (Explorers)
- Children ages 4–5: One adult or youth for every eight children (Navigators)
- Children ages 6–12: One adult or youth for every twelve children (Pathfinders)

These ratios are posted in each classroom. While qualified youth helpers qualify for these ratios, there still must always be an adult present in the classroom. Once a ratio is met, additional children should not be accepted into a classroom if doing so would exceed the ratio—unless and until additional volunteers are added. If for any reason the ratio is exceeded, the check-in monitor should be notified and asked for more volunteers in order to maintain these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

## Diaper Changing and Restroom Procedure

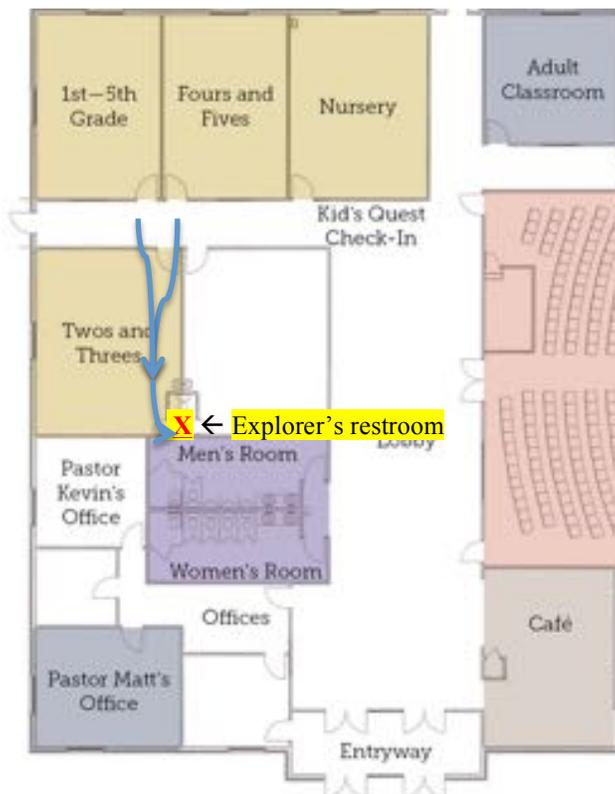
### *0 Months through 1 Year Olds (Nursery)*

Parents should ensure their child has a clean diaper before checking them into the classroom. Volunteers will change diapers as needed or requested during the church's gathering. Only women are allowed to change diapers, and only in the presence of at least one other volunteer.

### *2 Year Olds to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade (Explorers – Pathfinders)*

If a child in Explorers through Pathfinders needs to use the restroom, a volunteer will assist the child into the restroom attached to the Explorers classroom. If the child is in the Navigators or Pathfinders class, then a teacher, youth helper, or check-in monitor will accompany the child through the Explorers classroom in order to use the restroom. The volunteer will wait outside the closed restroom door unless the child requires assistance. If the child requires assistance, only a female volunteer may go inside the restroom to help. The female volunteer will ensure that the child washes their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer) immediately afterward.

Parents should take their children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class. At check-in, parents should communicate how volunteers might assist in their child's bathroom needs. Otherwise, this bathroom policy will be in effect.



## Appropriate Discipline

All children's ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be

maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). During correction, a child should never be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discrete; in the classroom (not in the hallway); and never outside of the sight of others.

Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for the child and redirecting to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate. Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to introduce children to the gospel.

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal (physical) punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, hitting, or squeezing. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, volunteer or staff should ask the check-in monitor to contact the parents to come and pick up their child (a church directory is in the office). If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be immediately called so the child can be removed. Volunteers, staff or coordinators are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering other children. Please report any of these problems (as well as the appropriate response taken to deal with the behavior) to the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator. Once a child is removed from children's ministry, reinstatement is possible at the determination of the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator. A child may be reinstated if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

For further information regarding discipline, please speak with the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator.

## **Physical Touch Policy**

Three types of relationships are important to consider: adult volunteer-to-child, youth-to-child, and child-to-child

### ***Volunteer-to-Child***

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.

- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force (See Appendix 1).
- Volunteers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in "safe" areas and for brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 3.
- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.

### ***Youth-to-Child and Child-to-Child***

- No male and female minors should ever be alone together while participating or serving in children's ministry.
- No inappropriate touching (as defined above and in Appendix 1) of any kind will be accepted.
- Fighting will not be tolerated and any child participating in violent action will be dismissed from a class/program and placed into his or her parent's care.

Further guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate touch can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Food and Drink Policy**

The primary mission of Children's Ministry at GCC is to provide a safe and loving environment for the children entrusted to our care so that their parents may be fed spiritually without undue concern. To this end, we seek to guard feeding any child food that the child is known to be allergic to.

The children in KidsQuest are often given water or juice and a small snack during their time in our care. These snacks usually contain gluten in them. If a child is allergic or sensitive to wheat or gluten, the parent should do the following:

- Verbally notify the child's teacher and the Check-In Monitor
- Note the nature of the allergy and how to respond to an allergic reaction.
- If desired, provide an alternative snack for the child.

Volunteers may offer properly labeled sippy cups containing only water, as provided by the parents upon signing the child in.

### **Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies**

Parents of children with allergies should talk with the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator about how to handle any allergic reactions. Upon parental request, allergy information about children of members may be posted in the child's classroom.

### Serving Snacks

Volunteers should always be mindful of a child's allergies before serving a snack. If a volunteer is unsure of whether or not a child is allergic to a certain food, he or she can check the child's nametag, which lists the child's food allergies.

## **Alternate Locations**

### ***Outdoor Playground***

Occasionally teachers will have a portion of their allotted time with the children outside in the enclosed playground adjacent to the children's ministry hallway. Playing outside should only occur when temperatures are not too hot or too cold, and when there is no stormy or otherwise inclement weather.

### ***Sanctuary***

Some of the classrooms will occasionally come into the main sanctuary in order to observe and celebrate a baptism. When this happens, the children will be sat in the same section, with volunteers on both sides. After the baptism, the children will return to their classroom, and check-out will occur as normal from the classroom, and not from the sanctuary.

## **Security and Emergency Response**

### ***Emergency Situations***

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help.

### ***Accidents, First Aid and Medical Emergencies***

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits in the cabinet that has a red cross on it. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called and parents will be located and informed immediately. Once the emergency has passed, volunteers should complete an Incident Report Form (see Appendix 4) for all injuries, whether major or minor prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident.

In the case of a medical emergency, a deacon, team leader or staff will post "888" on the projectors in the sanctuary to summon medical volunteers to the children's ministry area. Depending the severity of the situation, someone may also call 911.

### ***Evacuation Procedures***

In the event of a fire, a staff person or volunteer should call 911 and also assist all children in immediately evacuating the building. Volunteers and staff will help keep parents away from the children's hall. Parents should not report to the children's area because they risk creating chaos and blocking the exits for children. Instead, parents will meet their children in the designated area outside of the church building (through the playground, past the fire pit, near the east side of GCC's property; see the diagram below). Evacuation information is located in all of the KidsQuest classrooms. Volunteers and parents should familiarize themselves with this information.



***A Live Threat***

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard.

**Step 1: Volunteers and Staff Evacuate Children**

- As soon as staff, deacon/deaconess or a volunteer is confronted with a real threat, they are to respond immediately.
- If it is safe to do so, the first course of action should be to evacuate the building (through the playground, past the fire pit, near the east side of GCC’s property; see the diagram above).

**Step 2: Volunteers and Staff Communicate the Danger**

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify pastor over children’s ministry, a KidsQuest coordinator, or the check-in monitor on duty about the problem. One of these individuals will then notify the remaining volunteers about the live threat.
- When it is safe to do so, staff, a KidsQuest coordinator, or a volunteer should call 911. Give the following information:
  - Location and the nature of the threat.
  - If shots have been fired tell police we have an “active shooter.”

**Step 3: Hide.**

- If running is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.

- Close the door, and if the door is halved, then close the top portion of the door and pull the latch down.
- Barricade the doors with heavy furniture.
- Close and lock windows and close blinds.
- Turn off the lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door. If possible, stay out of sight of any interior windows.

#### Step 4: Staff or Volunteers fight the Live Threat

- If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, adults in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as a fire extinguisher or chairs.
- Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to confront the potential danger.

After the area has been made safe and secure by police, pastor over children's ministry, a KidsQuest coordinator, or other GCC staff will communicate an "all clear" sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

#### ***Missing Child or Kidnapping***

In the case of a missing child, the staff will first do a thorough check of the children's ministry area to make sure the child is not in another part of the building. If the child is not found after a thorough check of the children's ministry area, then Check-in monitors and other volunteers will continue to search for the child until they are found. If the child is not found, the staff or elders will call police to secure further help.

In the case of a kidnapping, the pastor over children's ministry, a KidsQuest coordinator, or other GCC staff should call 911 to secure help from the police.

#### ***Parent involvement in Emergency Procedures***

The pastor responsible for children's ministry will decide how and when to notify parents about security or emergency situations. Involving parents too early might cause unnecessary fears or panic. If an emergency does happen, parents will need guidance, pastoral care and counseling, so we rely on an elder or staff to walk with parents through difficult situations.

## **Healthy Child Policy**

### **Communicable Disease Policy**

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, several guidelines are in place concerning disease.

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.

2. Volunteers will use disposable latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.

3. Hand washing or use of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and volunteers.

4. GCC is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children. Team Leaders and coordinators have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with these *Healthy Child Policy* guidelines.

A child should **NOT** participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhea (Note: Children should be free of a fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before coming to children's ministry.)
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold – from onset of symptoms and one week thereafter
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Lice
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Children who appear ill during a class will be kept at the check-in desk with a volunteer while the check-in monitor locates the parents.

Please inform the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a GCC event so that other parents may be notified if necessary. If a child contracts an illness and has been in contact with other children while at GCC, it is the responsibility of parents to notify the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator.

Neither volunteers nor church staff may give any medication to any child.

## **Children with Special Needs Policy**

Parents of children with special needs are encouraged to contact the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator *before* signing the child into class. This allows the staff to assess the needs of the child and assist parents in transitioning their child into a classroom setting.

## **Universal Precautions**

Universal precautions are very effective for protecting both the children and volunteers from illness. These methods are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in any setting and should always be used.

Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- In rooms with children ages 23 months and below, remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the session, spray any non-floor surfaces that were used (tables, toys, counters, etc.) with a disinfectant spray, and then wipe those areas clean with a paper towel.

## **Neglect & Abuse Prevention, Reporting & Response**

### **Definitions**

What is child neglect and abuse? It is important to define our terms.

*Child neglect* is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

*Child abuse* is any recent act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.

*Child sexual abuse* is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

*Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.

*Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.

*Sexual exploitation* includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution; and using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.

*Child spiritual abuse* the use of spiritual authority (the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

### **Prevention**

GCC takes protection against and reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. In an effort to prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip staff, coordinators and volunteers about neglect and abuse during children's ministry trainings
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines as set out in this policy manual. Many of the policies are written to protect children, including the two-volunteer rule, visibility guidelines, and diaper and bathroom policy.
- Screen volunteers prior to contact with any children. This screening includes requiring church membership (for adults), filling out an extensive application, getting feedback from at least one reference, and (for adults) passing an extensive criminal background check run by a third party.
- Adult and Youth Volunteers must complete a GCC Youth & Family Volunteer Application (which includes a thorough background check), and pass (with at least 80% correct) the Child Protection Policy quiz *before* they begin to serve.
- Require all full-time staff to submit to a criminal background check within a month of joining staff.
- Repeat screening procedures and criminal background checks for full-time staff and adult volunteers every seven years.
- Require adult volunteers and staff to be members for at least four months prior to serving in children's ministry (except in rare circumstances).

Any instance of suspected or observed abuse or neglect should be handled with the following guidelines.

### ***Child Protection Committee***

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) consists of the pastor overseeing children's ministry and any GCC member who has been designated by the elders. All members of the CPC stand ready to address all allegations of neglect and abuse in accordance with the GCC church covenant and the laws of Indiana.

## **Reporting of Neglect & Abuse**

### ***Point of Contact for Reporting***

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the Associate Pastor, the KidsQuest Coordinator, or any elder at GCC. This reporting includes questionable behavior (overly flirtatious behavior, shoulder massages or other intimate acts, etc.) and/or possible offenses (volunteers observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, like abrasions, lacerations, etc.).

Any person who serves as the initial point of contact is required to report *all* allegations and/or eye-witness accounts to the Associate Pastor and KidsQuest Coordinator via written or verbal means.

### ***Guidelines for Mandatory Reporters***

Every citizen of Indiana is a mandatory reporter for neglect and child abuse. Thus, if any person suspects or witnesses or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the person must also fulfill his/her obligations to the law, including reporting to Child Protective Services or the police. At no time will the mandatory reporter be prohibited from reporting, even if their consultation with staff or leadership in the church results in a disagreement.

District and federal laws authorize civil or criminal penalties or civil liability for failing to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse. In addition, obstructing or interfering with an investigation of child abuse can result in criminal charges.

The church will not tolerate any retaliation against a reporter who has a reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse.

### ***More Guidelines on Reporting***

When available, the following information will be documented and reported when helpful:

- The name, age, gender and address of the victim(s).
- The name, age, gender and address of the alleged perpetrator/offender(s).
- The nature, frequency, date(s) and location(s) of the abuse alleged to have occurred.
- The relationship between the victim and the alleged perpetrator/offender.
- Other evidence that supports the allegations (eyewitness, medical exams, confessions, etc.)

What should a volunteer, staff, coordinator or elder do when they suspect, hear about or observe what appears to be a sign or symptom of neglect or abuse? Talk immediately with the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator. The volunteer, staff, coordinator or elder should document this information on the *Child Abuse Reporting* form, which is available in every classroom in the cabinet labeled "Sunday School."

What should the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator say or do with the child who is allegedly neglected or abused? Talk with the child and find out how the injury, neglect, or abuse happened, though be careful of the level of detail you pursue. Asking for too much detail might be harmful for a child as it causes them to relive the abusive experience. If the child is describing what might be abuse, the objective is to obtain very general information that may help substantiate or alleviate the suspicion. Ask the child open-ended questions and get them to relay the event in their own words. Be careful to not suggest answers to the child and be sensitive to the fact that the child will be scared to tell the story, sometimes out of fear that it will upset adults or will not be believed. Write out a report that should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of the conversation with the child, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not ask the child to undress in order to show bruises or injuries that are not visible. Include all of this information on the *Child Abuse Reporting* form, which is available in every classroom.

What should volunteers or staff report when they hear of a story of abuse? Note *what* the child said happened, *who* the child was with when it happened, *where* it happened, and *when* it happened. All of this should be documented

What should a volunteer or staff do when they observe an incident that may be abusive? Immediately intervene to protect the child; follow-up immediately with the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator; write out a report about the incident (see Appendix 2); and act in accordance with all reporting laws. The volunteer or staff should keep an on-going log of the suspected person's behavior and anything else that is relevant concerning the person or the child or their relationship.

### ***How Can We Learn About the Different Laws, Regulations, and Guidelines in Indiana?***

Laws, regulations, and guidelines for reporting child neglect and abuse differ from state to state. In Indiana, every adult is a mandatory reporter, that is, the state law requires an individual to report signs of suspected abuse if there is credible reason to do so. The Indiana Child Abuse or Neglect Hotline is 1-800-800-5556, and more information about reporting abuse can be found in Appendix 3 and at [childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/)

## **Response to Neglect & Abuse**

GCC will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

### ***Who Should be Notified?***

The church will seek professional assistance when deemed appropriate by the Associate Pastor and the elder board of GCC. Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse. The church may:

- Report suspicions or firsthand accounts or any knowledge of abuse to civil authorities. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities.
- Notify those shepherding the individual, notify those close to the individual, notify counselors, or notify medical personnel in order to obtain ongoing care for the victim(s) and families of the victim(s).
- Notify an insurance agent, denominational leader(s), or any other outside officials.
- Notify and consult with a church attorney.

### ***How Will GCC Respond to Allegations, Admission, or Criminal Conviction?***

Allegations of neglect or abuse, admission of child abuse by staff, elder, coordinator, volunteer, helper, or any member of GCC, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- Be reported to GCC's elder board. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed to the elder board within 48 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction;
- Immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children;
- Result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children.

The Associate Pastor and elders of GCC will decide on other appropriate responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, which may include:

- Contacting police or Child Protection Services (CPS);
- Notification of staff, coordinators and any volunteers;
- Reporting allegations, self-admission, or criminal conviction to the congregation during GCC's public services or members' meeting;
- Barring from any activities or church programs with children or the children's ministry area at the church building;
- The Child Protection Committee designating GCC members or staff to accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on GCC's property or anywhere in GCC's buildings (the alleged perpetrator will be notified of this requirement immediately after allegations are made known to staff or elders);
- Excommunication—the removal from church membership—of alleged perpetrator or criminal offender in a public members' meeting by the congregation;
- Barring alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property;
- Suspension or termination of a paid staff member or volunteer position;
- Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff, an elder, coordinator, volunteer, helper, or any member of GCC for misconduct or abuse against children.

If staff or GCC elders learn from Child Protection Services or police that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the GCC elders should:

- Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by police or Child Protection Services;
- Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser if appropriate;
- Remove the accused from activities or programs involving children, pending the outcome of the investigation;
- Appoint a member of the Child Protection Committee or the elder board to be a liaison with Child Protection Services and the police.

If an adult alleges an incident of neglect or abuse that happened when he was a child in a GCC program, then:

- The GCC elders should hire a trained mental health professional (preferably who is not associated with the church) who can provide the elders with an assessment. The victim will have to provide consent for such an interview and to have the assessment released to the GCC elders in confidence.
- If the accused is no longer a part of GCC then the GCC elders should consult with legal counsel to determine legal and moral need to report to police or Child Protection Services or any other organization that the accused may be a part of since his departure from GCC.
- Even if government officials are no longer bound to investigate due to a statute of limitations, GCC should respond to *all* allegations with the care and diligence traced out in this policy manual.

### ***Confidentiality***

The church, as well as mandatory reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law.

### ***Response to Media***

If appropriate, the GCC elders will respond to the media. Normally, one elder or member will be designated by the elder board to speak to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

# **APPENDIX 1: Inappropriate and Appropriate Touch**

## **Inappropriate Touching**

- Shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, kicking, hitting, or spanking a child for any reasons.
- Squeezing of arm, neck, face, or any parts of the body.
- Tickling children over 5 years old. It is over stimulating and is considered by some professionals to be a deceptive device that could lead to inappropriate touching.
- Children sitting on laps of adults is inappropriate for ages 6 and older.
- Holding or restraining children on the lap. However, holding a child 5 years and younger is appropriate for short time spans when comfort is needed by the child or the child's behavior is out-of-control or endangering other children.
- Touching a child in the genital areas except for a required diaper change, bathing/ washing, and assistance with toileting procedures. Otherwise, touch in the genital area is only permitted by medical personnel in case of injury or suspected injury.
- Kissing a child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. A child should never be allowed to kiss a staff member, volunteer, or another child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. Children are also not allowed to kiss one another. (Note: A kiss is appropriate on the cheek when it is included in a greeting, especially for certain cultures).
- Slapping a child on the behind, even when playing.
- Fondling children, even in non-private areas.
- Carrying a child on the back unless the child is unable to walk.

## **Appropriate Touching**

- A comforting pat on the shoulder and back, or allowing an emotionally distressed child to lean their head on your shoulder is appropriate.
- Back rub to help comfort, or put an irritable child to sleep is appropriate.
- High-Fives, handshakes, or the touching of two fists are appropriate and recommended touch, especially when interacting with older children.
- Holding hands is permitted with children 10 years and under when initiated by the child, or when helping a child to walk, climb stairs, etc.
- Holding a child firmly with your hands to restrain him/her is appropriate when it is used to prevent a child from an accident, injury, hurting self, others, or you.

# **APPENDIX 2: Geist Community Church Child Abuse Reporting Form**

*Instructions: If a volunteer, staff, coordinator, or elder suspects, hears about, or observes signs or symptoms of abuse, please: (1) Talk immediately with the Associate Pastor or KidsQuest Coordinator; (2) document any relevant information on this form, (3) report to Child Protective Services.*

*This report should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of what the child said, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not go back and interview the child. Fill this form out based on whatever information has already been obtained.*

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signs or symptoms of abuse observed:

Check all that apply:

- GCC Pastor/Elder Notified
- KidsQuest Coord. Notified
- Child Protective Services (CPS) notified (1-800-800-5556)

Bruises or injuries that are visible:

Emotions expressed by the child:

Summary of the conversation with the child:

Anything else that is relevant:

## **APPENDIX 3: Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Guidelines in Indiana**

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau*

*[http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/manda.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.cfm)*

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/>

Indiana Child Abuse or Neglect Hotline: 1-800-800-5556

# APPENDIX 4: Geist Community Church Incident Report Form

Use this form to report accident, injuries, medical situations or student behavior incidents.

If possible, complete this form within 24 hours and return back to the KidsQuest Coordinator or Associate Pastor.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT

Person(s) involved in the incident	Parent Names: (if incident involves a minor)
Address of the incident:	
Phone: Home:                      Cell:	<input type="radio"/> Child <input type="radio"/> Teacher <input type="radio"/> Helper
Date and Time:	Emergency Personnel (911 or paramedics) Notified? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Location of the Incident: (include classroom, and where in classroom):	
Details of Incident: (what happened, how, factors leading up to, etc. Please be specific):	
Describe the injury, if applicable (body part, type [laceration, sprain, etc.], severity, etc):	
Was Medical treatment provided? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refused	
If Yes, where was treatment Provided? : <input type="radio"/> On site <input type="radio"/> Urgent Care <input type="radio"/> Emergency Room <input type="radio"/> other	
<b>REPORTER INFORMATION</b>	
Individual Submitting Report (Print Name)	
Signature:	
Date:	
Report Received by:	Date:

## **APPENDIX 5: Geist Community Church Minor/Parent(s) Agreement Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that serving in GCC's Children's Ministry is a sacred trust, and that many people will be relying on me in my service. I will endeavor to serve faithfully by keeping track of what Sundays I am slated to volunteer, arriving on time, and helping with excellence. I will minimize last-minute cancellations or not-showing up on days when I am scheduled so as not to create an emergency to be resolved by others.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that my child's service in GCC's Children's Ministry is a sacred trust, and that many people will be relying on his/her service. As a parent, I will endeavor to foster my child's faithfulness by giving rides when necessary, by prioritizing Sunday morning attendance especially on days when he/she is serving, and by otherwise not hindering my child's service.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date