

Child Care Policy Milnerton Methodist Church

Philosophy and objectives of the Children's Ministry

Purpose

The Children's Ministry (Kids for Jesus) at Milnerton Methodist Church exists to provide a loving, nurturing and safe environment in which our children can learn about God and develop a personal relationship with our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We desire to partner with parents, family members and the church body in instilling a deep-seated desire for children to learn to:

- Love Christ
- Live for Christ
- Lead others to Christ

Child Care Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide the best possible care and safety for our children whilst they are in the care of the Church.

Safety & Security

It is of utmost importance that our children be taught and nurtured in a responsible and safe environment. We also desire that our teachers/volunteers be protected from any false allegations of misconduct.

- Each applicant desiring to serve in our Children's Ministry is required to complete Form 30 which will check for their name on the sex offender's registry.
- Each volunteer in our ministry is required to read and abide by the policies and procedures outlined in this document.
- Each volunteer is required to undergo a "shadowing" (familiarization) process with a seasoned volunteer before assuming classroom responsibilities.

Staff and Volunteer Support

It is our goal, not only to provide for the safety of our children and youth, but also to support and provide, to the best of our ability, a system of procedures that will protect the staff and volunteers from being falsely accused of wrongful acts. This is accomplished by:

- a) Screening potential leaders to determine where a volunteer would be best suited to use their gifts, abilities, interests and experiences.
- b) Providing leadership development that will further prepare the volunteer for leadership within a class.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Supervision Ratios

Our goal in the classroom is to provide an environment of acceptance and love in which learning can take place. Room allocation is geared to the needs and size of a particular class/group.

For teaching classes: There will be a minimum of 1 adult teacher for every Sunday School class. When the class size goes above the registered size on a given Sunday, an extra volunteer will assist the teacher.

Record Keeping

Complete records are to be kept for each Sunday School class. These records are to include the names of children, addresses, phone numbers, parent name(s) and any **allergy/medical information** including medical aid membership numbers, that are important for leaders to know. Any special needs of a child should be noted on the registration form. Lists of classroom attendance are to be maintained each week. The names of leaders/volunteers are to be noted each week as well.

Restrooms

In Sunday School classes where children are under the age of 10, teachers are encouraged to have the whole class stop at the toilets on the way to the classroom, remain at the washroom area until everyone is finished, and then proceed to the classroom. Sunday School teachers of children over the age of 10 are asked to send children in pairs to the toilet, should it be required.

Where parents/guardians remain with their children in Children's Church parents/guardians are encouraged to take their children to the toilet prior to the beginning of the service. Should a child need to go to the toilet during the service, parents are encouraged to go with the child. No child should be sent to the toilet alone. If parents determine a child to be old enough to go to the toilet without an adult, it is recommended that they send two older children together. Parents/guardians must take the responsibility to monitor their children. When this is not possible, it is recommended that the child use the toilets located nearest to the sanctuary/meeting room.

Sick Children

Children who are not feeling well should not be received into the classroom. Some signs of illness are: unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhoea, inflamed mouth and throat, complaining of sore ears or throat, and rash. Children with these or similar symptoms should be returned to their parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian is not present, the child should be kept separate from other children while the parent/guardian is contacted to come and collect the child.

EMERGENCIES: Injury, Allergies & First Aid

Teachers are not to give or apply any medications to children except for bandages for minor cuts/abrasions, or ice packs for bumps. If a child needs medication, the parent must administer it. No medications will be left in the classroom with the following exception: children who carry inhalers for asthma or medication for serious allergies. If a child is injured while in the care of the Sunday school, the teacher/volunteer will immediately notify the teacher in charge. The teacher in charge will be responsible for advising the child's parent. **All injuries must be reported no matter how minor they may seem.** If a child has any allergies, special needs or conditions, please ensure the parent/guardian notes them at registration to ensure the child's teacher is aware.

Aggressive Behaviour

1. Biting, hitting, pushing, scratching, or pulling are considered aggressive behaviours and will be addressed promptly.
2. If a child displays any of these behaviours, he or she will be removed from the class and spoken to using the "tips for teaching" as seen below. If their behaviour persists after corrective action has been applied the parents will be contacted.

FOR TEACHERS/VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Behaviour

Volunteers must always be above reproach in their words and conduct. They are to behave in a Godly manner, demonstrating Christian conduct, respect, honesty and trustworthiness.

Volunteers must not in any way be involved in any of the following activities with older children: extended hugging, kissing, sitting on a lap, inappropriate touching or being alone with a child. If a child approaches an adult leader with the intent to hug or kiss, or unexpectedly does so, the adult leader should accept the affection, but should as quickly as possible, in a non-rejecting manner, encourage a more appropriate form of physical contact. Appropriate expressions for ages 0 - 3 include picking up the child, comforting the child, holding the hand of child, changing diapers. Appropriate physical contact with children ages 4+ could include a handshake, pat on the back, quick hug of encouragement with hands located in shoulder area, and a 'high five'.

Volunteers who are not feeling well should not lead a group of children. Notification, if possible, to a team member(s) should happen as soon as possible so that other volunteers can step in and assist in the supervision of children. When notification is not possible until the last minute, adjustments should be made in the program to allow for doors to be open and the group meeting to take place in a higher traffic area where others can check on the group without interrupting the session.

General

- Volunteers must be knowledgeable of and adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.
- Personal belongings should be kept off the floor and out of reach of children.
- Volunteers are asked to keep their cell phones on vibrate and refrain from use unless it is an emergency.

- Volunteers will refrain from engaging in any conduct, activity (including the posting of questionable or inappropriate messages or material via internet social media), or associations that may reflect negatively or bring discredit upon themselves, their position as a volunteer, and/or Milnerton Methodist Church or Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Scheduling

- Volunteers will co-ordinate with teachers concerning work schedules.
- Once a schedule is made, any changes should be made by switching with a team member. It is the volunteer's responsibility to find a replacement if they are unable to work as scheduled and to notify the Teachers as soon as possible.
- In the event of an emergency causing the volunteer to be late or absent, it is imperative the volunteer inform the necessary parties as soon as possible.

Arrival & Set-up

- Arrive a minimum of 30 minutes before the service begins (or sooner if you need additional preparation time). Keep in mind that tardiness is often contagious and adversely affects everyone.
- Set out any materials needed for class.
- Check that sound system and computer are in working order.
- Put out name tags and registration forms.
- Ensure that registration tables are ready.

Class Time

- One volunteer should welcome the children and take attendance while the other volunteer engages/entertains the children.
- One volunteer should remain at the door at all times, ensuring no child enters or exists without a parent or guardian.
- Review the classroom rules with the children each week. Remember, repetition and consistency increases retention. (Refer to tips for teaching for classroom rules)
- Volunteers are encouraged to sit on the floor while interacting with the children. Being at "eye level" often aids in gaining and maintaining the children's attention.
- Volunteers and children will remain in the classroom at all times. Supervised restroom visits are the only exceptions.
- Enjoy the children and the opportunity to minister to them.

Young Leaders

To develop new young leaders, primary and high school students are encouraged to assist in the leadership of various children's ministries. As such, they should be provided with opportunities to develop their unique gifts, abilities and interests. Leaders-in-training must be paired up with adult leaders who can assist in the development of their gifts.

TIPS FOR TEACHING

Use Classroom Rules

1. Obey the teacher
2. Listen
3. Be kind
4. Be safe
5. Keep your hands and feet to your self

Practise Preventative Actions

1. Create a loving, caring atmosphere
2. Establish and communicate realistic expectations
3. Focus on positive actions
4. Be fair and consistent

Use Corrective Actions

1. Handle situations individually as much as possible
2. Give a warning when a child fails to follow the rules
3. Remind the child of the rules
4. Explain why the behaviour is unacceptable
5. Redirect the child to something positive
6. Explain the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by describing the correct way to behave
7. If a child repeats the action, guide them to a quiet place separate from the other children for a short, but designated period
8. If the child persists in the unacceptable behaviour, remove them from the class and notify the parents.

CHILD ABUSE: PREVENTION AND PROCEDURES

What must I do if I suspect that a child is being abused or deliberately neglected?

Abuse and deliberate neglect must be reported to a **designated child-protection organisation**, the provincial Department of Social Development or a police official. The report may be verbal, written or through an online notification. Verbal reports can be made in person or by telephone. The Police Child Protection Units have an online notification system for reporting cases of child abuse for police investigation. Reports can also be emailed to the designated child-protection organisation in your area. When making a telephone or online report, the child's name, parent's details and physical address must be included as well as the contact details of the reporting person. It is important to note that the person reporting the abuse or neglect can remain anonymous. The report is recorded using Form 22 (see *Appendix 19 - page 136 of Children, Church and the Law*). The official who receives the report is required to submit it to the Provincial Department of Social Development within 24 hours of receiving it. The case will then be referred to a social worker for investigation. The Sexual Offences Act also states that anyone who has knowledge of a sexual offence committed against a child is required to report the incident to a police official. **Refer to** section 110(1) of the Act; Consolidated Regulation 33(1); Practice Note 2 and section 54(1)(a) of the Sexual Offences Act 32 of 2007.

Definitions

Physical Abuse: This is the use of physical force by the caretaker (parent/guardian, babysitters, or foster parent) of the child which results in any injury to the child. This injury is sometimes described as a non-accidental injury by health professionals.

Physical Neglect: This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary or essential physical care from the child with resulting injury or damage to the child. Necessary physical care can include food, nutrition, shelter, clothing, medical care, safety, supervision, sensory stimulation (particularly to young infants).

Emotional Abuse: This is when the parent or caretaker of the child acts out their negative or ambiguous feelings towards the child, resulting in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of behaviour may consist of constant chastising, belittling, verbal tirades, ridicule, humiliation, or the out and out rejection of the child's sense of self-worth and dignity.

Emotional Neglect: This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary emotional care and support from the child which results in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of neglect might consist of withholding affection and love from the child; it might also include the withholding of affirmations of the child's self-worth, trust and sense of belonging. In extreme forms, emotional neglect can involve the complete withdrawal of any verbal and/or non-verbal interactions with the child, manifesting the complete rejection of the child.

Sexual Abuse: This is the sexual exploitation of a child by a caretaker or other family member, or any adult, resulting in damage or injury to the child sexually, either psychologically or physically. Forms of sexual exploitation include behaviour of a sexual nature, touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse.