



MINISTRYSAFE

ROCKDALE COMMUNITY
CHURCH
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

POLICIES AND
PROCEDURES
MANUAL

Dear Children's Volunteer,

At Rockdale Community Church (RCC), we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for RCC volunteers and staff members. These policies are intended to: (1) create a safe environment for children; (2) protect our children; (3) protect our volunteer workers; and (4) support the mission of RCC.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

The RCC Children's Ministry

RCC

Policies & Procedures for Children's Ministries

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Overview of the RCC Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, RCC requires all volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS**.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

RCC policies and procedures require that volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Every person is required to report any policy violations to a church leader or a member of the RCC Safety Committee. Volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip RCC volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, RCC requires all volunteers to complete MinistrySafe training, including sexual abuse awareness and other topics (online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Volunteers are required to complete the RCC Screening Process, which requires a volunteer to:

- complete the MinistrySafe online training and certification
- complete a face-to-face interview
- provide references to be checked

****a volunteer must be a member of RCC for one year before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students or vulnerable populations.***

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

RCC requires that all volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Child Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

RCC has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at RCC to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their Lead Teacher, the Children's Director or a member of the Elder Board.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

RCC is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the RCC Safety Committee Chair and, if necessary, to the appropriate state and/or local authorities.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the RCC Safety Committee. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a member of the RCC Safety Committee.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

RCC volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all RCC policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal or reassignment from Children's Ministry's positions for volunteers. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Board of Elders.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, RCC volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to a Lead Teacher in the ministry area, the Children's Director, or member of the Board of Elders.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministries. This suspension will continue until the completion of a full investigation.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at RCC.

Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at RCC.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Volunteers at RCC are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a co-worker, to the Lead Teacher of the class, the Children's Director, or the Board of Elders.

Georgia law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency. A volunteer *may* report to a Lead Teacher, the Children's Director or the Elder Board and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

Volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a volunteer in Children's Ministries, the Children's Director or the Elder Board will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Elder Board will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

The Elder Board will determine the necessity of reporting any incident to the appropriate state and/or local officials.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The RCC Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

RCC Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, RCC will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet semi-annually or as needed.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable RCC Children's Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. a member of the Deacon Board
2. the Children's Director
3. the Safety Committee Chair
4. age level representatives
5. a member of the Elder Board, if so desired

MEETINGS

The Safety Committee Chair will lead the meeting of the Safety Committee on a semi-annually basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing RCC policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the RCC Board of Deacons regarding safety issues.

Children's Ministries Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe any volunteer interactions with children.

1. **The Children's Director** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
2. **The Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Children's Ministry program at least once each quarter.
3. **The Elder Board** meets with the Children's Director semi-annually to discuss Children's Ministry.
4. **The Deacon Board** meets with the Children's Director once each year to discuss Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
5. **The Children's Director** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs occurring weekly.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Children's Director or a designated representative will be responsible for ensuring that the RCC Children's Classrooms are monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the church building or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministries volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that volunteer will take the child to a room or location occupied by others, or easily observed by others. At least two volunteers should remain in a visible location until all children are picked up by parents.

After every programming event, Children's Ministries volunteers or a designated deacon must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas which are not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

RCC is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery I - Infant	1	1
Nursery II – Crawlers/Toddlers	1	2
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
Kids Kamp	2	20

If a Lead Teacher is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the Children's Director. Children's Director will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

DISCIPLINE

It is RCC's policy that volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
- 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- 5) Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- 6) Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.")
- 7) Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Children's Director.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms, the female bathroom monitor will enter the bathroom until volunteer and all children leave.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- 6) Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available from RCC in the children's area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.
- 8) Adult intervention will also be provided for young children between the ages of four and five, who are generally potty trained, but may still need more restroom assistance than school age children six and above. Our greeters for the day, stationed in the front foyer area, will be called upon to fill in for the helper in the classroom while the helper accompanies a student(s) to the restroom. When the helper and students return to the classroom, the greeter will resume his/her regular assignment.

School age children

It is recommended, during the Sunday School hour, that school age children be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom, unless there are special circumstances present.

If a volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child

requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another volunteer.

Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

INTOXICANTS

Volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any RCC facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

MEDICATION

Medication may be given to a child by a volunteer with a doctor's prescription and written parental authorization. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream.

NUDITY

Volunteers in RCC's Children's Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), volunteer will submit a plan to the Children's Director concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in RCC Children's Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the RCC application and screening process should always be present.

TRANSPORTATION

Volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving RCC vans, or vehicles owned or rented by RCC, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive RCC owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of RCC volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at RCC. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at RCC will be required to complete the RCC screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

RCC is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, RCC has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a Lead Teacher, the Children's Director or a member of the Elder Board.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Children's volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director or a member of the Elder Board.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Volunteers in Children's Ministries at RCC are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

TOBACCO USE

RCC requires volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during RCC activities or programs. RCC is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. RCC volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to RCC volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their Lead Teacher or the Children's Director before releasing the child.

SUPERVISION

Volunteers in Children's Ministries are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Rockdale Community Church's (RCC) Children's Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving at RCC.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by RCC.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my voluntary service at RCC at any time

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual relationship between me and RCC. Applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of RCC policies and procedures manual.

Volunteer's name (please print)

Volunteer's signature

Date: _____