



MINISTRYSAFE

**St. Paul's Evangelical Church
Children's Ministry Policies
And Procedures Handbook**

Dear Children's Volunteer, Staff Member, or Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to St. Paul's Evangelical Church!

At St Paul's, we love kids! We know they are truly gifts from God. This is why we take seriously our responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for them at all times as we help them develop personal relationships with Jesus Christ.

We created this handbook of policies and procedures to set expectations and provide guidance to our church volunteers and staff members on how we intend to provide such a safe and nurturing environment for every child entrusted to our care. This handbook explains the screening process each volunteer and staff member must undergo before they may serve in our Children's Ministry. We also require each of our volunteers and staff members to review and agree to follow the guidelines and policies contained in this handbook in order to serve in our Children's Ministry. We do this not only to protect our children, but to assist our workers and reassure the parents/guardians entrusting us with the care of their child.

If you are planning to serve in our Children's Ministry, we ask that you carefully read this entire handbook and then sign and return the agreement form located on the last page if you agree to follow each of the handbook's policies and guidelines.

Sincerely,

The Elders of St. Paul's Evangelical Church

St. Paul's Evangelical Church Policies & Procedures for Children's Ministries

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Glossary of Terms

- Adult: Any person 18 years of age or older.
- Child: Any person under the age of 18 who has not completed the 6th grade.
- Children's Ministry: Any church sponsored ministry to those 6th grade and under.
- Staff: Any person paid by St. Paul's to perform responsibilities.
- Supervisor: A designated ministry leader whether paid or unpaid by St. Paul's.
- Children's Ministry Worker: Any person approved by St. Paul's to work with children in Children's Ministry.

St. Paul's Evangelical Church Safety System

St. Paul's Evangelical Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS**.

STEP ONE: Screening Process

St. Paul's requires each prospective worker to:

1. Submit an Employment Application (employees only);
2. Complete the Child/Youth Ministry Application;
3. Participate in a personal interview; and
4. Provide requested references.

Once these initial steps are complete, a St. Paul's staff member or appointed Supervisor will notify the applicant of the need to complete further steps if it is determined that the applicant would be a good fit to serve in the Children's ministry based upon the available information. Strong preference will be given to volunteers who are members of St. Paul's. Those not meeting this preference may be required to provide additional information, such as a pastoral reference letter from their home church, a more thorough interview, and/or affirming agreement with the EFCA statement of faith.

STEP TWO: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers must review the policies contained in this handbook and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with St. Paul's policy requirements.

STEP THREE: Criminal Background Check

All staff members and volunteers seeking to participate in Children's Ministry must pass an appropriate criminal background check before their application will be approved.

STEP FOUR: Training

Training meetings generally occur at least once per year and provide instruction on: teaching children Bible truths, implementing this handbook, and recognizing signs of abuse and abuser characteristics. As part of these training meetings, all Children Ministry Workers must complete a one-hour MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training live or online at www.MinistrySafe.com. Volunteers must attend the earliest possible training meeting prior to or after they begin working with children. Training in these areas will be renewed every two years via MinistrySafe.com and/or another St. Paul's Evangelical Church sponsored training.

Child Safety Handbook

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY STAFF AND SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

St. Paul's expects the following of its Staff and Supervisors:

1. **Children's Ministry Staff** should meet with their direct supervisor at least on a monthly basis to assess the state and direction of Children's Ministry.
2. **Children's Ministry Supervisors should** conduct periodic verbal performance evaluations of ministry volunteers that include affirmation of volunteer strengths and adherence to this handbook.
3. **Children's Ministry Staff and Supervisors** shall meet with the Elder Board on at least an annual basis to discuss and report on Children's Ministry, including safety training, procedures, and goals.
4. **The Chairman of the Children and Family Ministry Team** shall conduct at least one unscheduled observation each quarter for programs occurring weekly.

TWO ADULT RULE AND WORKER TO CHILD RATIO

In order to provide adequate supervision in all Children's Ministry programs St. Paul's requires reasonable worker-to-children ratios in each program setting. St. Paul's requires, at minimum, two approved adult Children Ministry Workers for every gathering of children at a St. Paul's sponsored event. Further, Children's Ministry Workers should abide by the following minimum worker-to-child ratios:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Children</u>
Nursery	2	: 8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	: 12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	: 18
Elementary	2	: 20
Kids Camp	2	: 20

If a particular program is 'out of ratio' the workers should immediately attempt to notify the program supervisor. It is the Children's Ministry Supervisors responsibility to ensure that the Children's Ministry area is properly monitored during Sunday morning events. At all other times, the particular program supervisor, for which childcare is offered, fulfills this role. Supervisors must make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with the above policy.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

As a general rule, staff members and volunteers must not allow themselves to be left alone with a child or children while serving in Children's Ministry programs. Another adult or approved Children's Ministry Worker should be present at all times. To prevent being left alone with a child or children, the Children's Ministry Worker should relocate with the child(ren) to a location occupied or easily observable by others. No child may be left unattended during Children's Ministry programming or classes. Further, children must remain in view of the Children Ministry workers; if one or more children make their way into an unobservable or difficult to view area, a Children's Ministry Worker should redirect them to a more open and observable area.

DISCIPLINE

Staff members and volunteers shall not use any form of physical discipline. Staff members and volunteers may, however, use time-outs, verbal redirection, and other reasonable non-physical methods of behavior management when necessary to correct behavior. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another). All discipline or redirection should be for the good of the child and should include encouraging affirmation upon completion of the discipline or redirection. Uncontrollable or disruptive child behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the immediate ministry supervisor. If a child becomes very disruptive or poses a danger to other children or workers, their parent(s)/guardian should be contacted to pick up their child. In any case where a child posed a danger to others, the child may not return to the Children's Ministry until a Children's Ministry supervisor has discussed the situation with a parent/guardian and determined that the child is unlikely to continue the unacceptable behavior.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. St. Paul's Children Ministry Workers should strive to ensure that verbal interactions are encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children. In addition, Children Ministry workers should endeavor to avoid even the appearance of impropriety with the manner and content of their speech.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

St. Paul's adopts a "physical contact policy" that promotes both a positive and nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while setting clear boundaries meant to protect children and workers from even the appearance of impropriety. The personal behavior of Children Ministry Workers must foster trust at all times and are expected to engage only in personal conduct that is above reproach. All Children's Ministry Workers shall adhere to the following guidelines during all Children's Ministries programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back, and other similar forms of showing appropriate and positive physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting, as long as the child does not indicate a desire against such contact.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Children's Ministry Workers should immediately report any inappropriate physical contact to a program supervisor and/or a member of the Safety Response Team.
3. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected. Children's Ministry Workers must not force physical contact on a reluctant child. Children's Ministry Workers have responsibility for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including other children.
4. Appropriate 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.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

St. Paul's sets the following guidelines to direct Children Ministry Workers who need to assist children with diapering or restroom use:

Diapering

Only Children's Ministry workers or the child's parent/legal guardian may remove and change a child's diaper. Any special instructions from parents/legal guardians concerning diapering should be recorded on the child's registration card and then followed. Children Ministry Workers serving in the nursery should periodically check to see if a child needs a diaper change and, if so, change them without delay. Diaper changes should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers and should only be done on baby changing stations. A child must not be left unattended on a changing table. Children should then be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of diaper change.

Toilet training

Children's Ministry Workers shall not force a child to toilet train. Any instructions from parents/legal guardians concerning their child's toilet training and/or use of bathroom facilities should be recorded on the child's registration card and then followed to the extent that doing so does not unreasonably force a child to toilet train against their will.

A Children's Ministry Worker should take a child who indicates they need to use the restroom to the restroom without undue delay. One Children's Ministry Worker may take the child to the restroom but must keep the door at least partially open and offer the least amount of assistance needed. When possible, restrooms in the children's nursery area should be used. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. St. Paul's has extra clothing and diapers available in the children's area. Soiled clothing should be retained in a plastic bag and provided to the parents at pickup time.

Fully toilet-trained children

One Children's Ministry Worker may accompany fully toilet-trained children to a restroom area but should not enter the restroom alone unless the restroom has separated stalls and the worker is of the same gender as the child. If the Children's Ministry worker enters the restroom, the door must be left partially open.

If a child requests assistance, the Children's Ministry Worker must only provide the minimum amount of assistance needed and then exit the stall area or single-restroom. If a child has had an "accident", the workers should reassure the child, deliver alternative clothing, and allow the child to privately change themselves. Any required assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another Children's Ministry Worker. Soiled clothing should be retained in a plastic bag and provided to the parents at pickup time.

Children's Ministry Workers should inform parents/legal guardians of special-needs individuals who may require diapering assistance that only parents/legal guardians may change diapers once the child reaches the age of five (5). The parent/legal guardian must take a Children's Ministry pager and/or provide a cell phone number and location where they can be reached should the child need diapering assistance. Children's Ministry Workers must, without delay, contact the parent/legal guardian if they suspect the child may need diapering assistance and request that they return to assist the child.

ADULT-THEMED ISSUES / NUDITY

While involved in any St. Paul's Children's Ministry, Children's Ministry Workers are prohibited from the use, possession, or inappropriate discussion of adult items such as tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and sexually explicit material. Children seeking to discuss such adult-themed issues should be directed to address their questions to their parents. Staff members and volunteers in St. Paul's Evangelical Church's Children's Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

MEDICATIONS/MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Children's Ministry Workers may not provide or allow a child to take medication absent written instructions from the parent/guardian (in the case of non-prescription medication) and only with evidence that a doctor has prescribed the medication (in the case of prescription medication). The medication should be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication, so that dosage information can be verified. Any specific details for administering medication should also be included in written instructions. This policy does not apply to diaper ointment/medication, insect bite cream, and topical antiseptics after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

In the case of a medical emergency, a Children's Ministry Worker should administer appropriate medication provided by the child's parent/legal guardian if warranted. The worker should then contact the parent/guardian or dial 911 and request immediate medical attention if needed. Children's Ministry Workers should never hesitate to dial 911.

CHILDHOOD FOOD ALLERGIES

St. Paul's welcomes children with food allergies and recognizes special precautions must be taken to protect against this serious health condition. When a parent/legal guardian indicates their child has a food allergy or should avoid certain foods, each Children's Ministry Worker must follow the avoidance instructions provided. A child with a food allergy should not be served any food where a label cannot be checked to ensure the product does not contain the target allergen nor processed in a facility that may have contained the target allergen. St. Paul's Children Ministry is a nut free program.

TOY SANITATION / SICKNESS PREVENTION

Efforts should be used to regularly sanitize toys and exposed surfaces in the nursery and toddler areas to prevent the spreading of germs using disinfecting wipes provided for use in the Children's Ministry. Children's Ministry Workers should contact a parent/legal guardian if a child appears sick and request that they take their child out of Children's Ministry to prevent other children from getting sick as well.

TRANSPORTATION

Children's Ministry Workers may occasionally be called upon to provide transportation for children for off-campus Church-sponsored activities. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. A parent/legal guardian needs to provide written consent to allow the transportation of their child during the Church-sponsored activity.
2. Only adults over the age of 21 with a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance may transport children, and must obey all traffic signals and speed limits. Drivers should drive carefully and defensively.
3. Appropriate safety restraint devices (seatbelts/booster seats/car seats) must be provided and worn at all times during vehicle occupancy by adults and children.

4. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
5. Children Ministry Workers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
6. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving, unless in an emergency.

POLICY VIOLATIONS, SUSPECTED ABUSE, AND REPORTING

St. Paul's Evangelical Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, St. Paul's has no tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at St. Paul's 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 immediate supervisor or a member of the Safety Response Team.

The St. Paul's Evangelical Church Safety Response Team, in concert with the Children and Family Ministry team, will take appropriate action on behalf of the church if they receive a report that a severe policy violation or abuse has occurred. Final decisions related to church discipline will be the responsibility of the Board of Elders in conjunction with information received from the Safety Response Team and the Children and Family Ministry team, as appropriate. Substantiated suspicions of abuse will be reported, in accordance with state law, to legal authorities. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect directly to the appropriate legal authorities.

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH SAFETY RESPONSE TEAM

Mission Statement

Recognizing the importance of providing a safe environment for children, St. Paul's Evangelical Church has established a standing Safety Response Team to quickly and appropriately investigate and respond to any report of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

Composition

The Safety Response Team will consist of at least three (3) persons as follows: The Senior Pastor, the chairperson of the Children and Family Ministry Team, the chairperson of the Elder Board, and, optionally, any other person so appointed by the Elder Board. The Safety Response Team may retain a trained counsellor or therapist to assist in an investigation. If the matter under investigation involves a member of the Safety Response Team, the member must recuse himself/herself and the Elder Board shall appoint a suitable replacement.

The Safety Response Team will act on an emergency basis following the report of any incident or allegation. All members of the Safety Response Team will receive annual training on abuse awareness, prevention, and reporting. The team will work in compliance with the Safety Response Team Charter.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of St. Paul's Children Ministry Workers 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 St. Paul's. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents, and any other persons, who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Children's programs at St. Paul's will be required to complete the volunteer application and screening process.

CHECK-IN AND RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to St. Paul's Children Ministry Workers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Children Ministry Workers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge. When a child is dropped off at a Children's Ministry event the parent/legal guardian will receive a unique receipt which matches their child's name tag.

Children's Ministry Workers must take care to only release children in their care to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up the child. Parent(s)/legal guardians shall have a written dismissal form on file for all children in the 6th grade and below, which Children's Ministry workers should follow. In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or a pastor before releasing the child.

SUPERVISION AND ENFORCEMENT

Children Ministry Workers are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs. To this end, all Children Ministry Workers are charged with the responsibility to advise their immediate supervisor if they believe a violation of these rules has occurred. Any questions regarding the policy should be directed to the ministry supervisor or the chairperson of the Children and Family Ministry Team.

REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Children and Family Ministry Team will review these policies and procedures annually and recommend updates as needed for Elder Board consideration. Children's Ministry Workers will receive notice of approved changes to these policies and procedures. The Elder Board may also approve, in writing, specific exceptions to this handbook on a case-by-case basis. These policies and procedures will be fully implemented by February 1st, 2016. All Children Ministry Workers must abide by this handbook in order to serve in Children's Ministry.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of St. Paul's Evangelical Church's Children's Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the handbook. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at St. Paul's Evangelical Church.

I understand that if I have any questions about these guidelines, that I should direct them to my immediate supervisor, a member of the Children's Family and Ministry Team, or one of the Church pastors.

I further understand my service in the Children's Ministry is conditioned upon my agreement to follow these policies and procedures.

I understand the handbook may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by St. Paul's Evangelical Church.

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and St. Paul's Evangelical Church. If 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.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page to remain attached to the St. Paul's Evangelical Church Policies and Procedures.]

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[This page to be detached and included in the employment/volunteer file.]