



Children's Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy

Before becoming a children's ministry volunteer:

1. Volunteers must profess Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior and have been baptized.
2. Volunteers must support the "Statement of Beliefs" of The Gathering International Church.
3. Volunteers must be regular attendees of The Gathering International Church.
4. Any person who is currently under investigation for or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse will not be permitted to volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children.
5. Only an adult volunteer for children's ministry can serve in the lead teacher position. Helpers can be adults or youth (6th-12th grade student).
6. Children's ministry volunteers must submit a "Children's Ministry Volunteer Application" which includes two references who can attest to the fact that the applicant is actively walking with the Lord and would not have any reason to hesitate in allowing them to work with children. The "Children's Ministry Volunteer Application" and two references will be kept on file.
7. Children's ministry volunteers must read and sign that they agree to follow the "Children's Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy." This document must be re-read and signed annually.

While serving as a child volunteer:

1. **Sign In & Pick Up Policy**
 - a. **Nursery – Preschool:** Sign-in sheets will be provided each week for all nursery - preschool classes. A parent must sign in a child, giving contact and allergy information. Parents should put their phones on vibrate, but know that we will call them should the need arise. Parents or an older sibling should pick up child(ren) immediately following the church service.
 - b. **Kindergarten – 2nd Grade:** Younger elementary children only need to get a name tag and proceed to class. Parents or an older sibling should pick up child(ren) immediately following the church service.
 - c. **3rd - 5th Grade:** Older elementary children only need to get a name tag and proceed to class. If a parent gives permission, older elementary children can be dismissed after class to go downstairs on their own, or if preferred parents or an older sibling can pick up child(ren) immediately following the church service.
2. **Sickness Policy:** If anyone is sick, (workers, children, or parents) they may not be permitted to enter a Sunday school classroom. If there has been a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours, individuals are not permitted to enter a Sunday school classroom. If there are any visible symptoms of being sick, other than allergies or teething, individuals are not permitted to enter a Sunday school classroom.

3. **Covid Policy:** If there has been direct exposure without a mask to someone who was positive with Covid in the past 5 days, individuals are not permitted to enter a Sunday school classroom. We will comply with all Covid policies put in place by the government and/or our meeting place.
4. **Separation Difficulty Policy:** Parents with children who seem to have difficulty separating can be asked to remain in class until the child settles down if the lead teacher deems necessary. Alternatively, if a child does not cease crying, in spite of all efforts of the workers, the parent should be asked to come and take the child.
5. **Loitering Policy:** No one is permitted to loiter outside the children’s classrooms. Adults who are not parents of children in Sunday school will not be permitted to enter Sunday school classrooms unless they are a Sunday school worker or the parent of a child experiencing separation anxiety.
6. **Three Person Policy:** To keep ourselves above reproach, and for the safety and security of everyone (adults and children alike), we will always try to enforce the “Three Person Policy,” meaning we should never have one adult with one child alone. There should always be more than one child or one adult in the room. We should always have a minimum of two workers in attendance, at all times, when children are being supervised. Likewise, if we keep doors open, have windows in our rooms, and/or have everyone together – there should never be room for inappropriate touch, misconduct, or concerning behavior observed by either another adult or a child.
7. **Diaper Policy:** Parents should take children to the restrooms or check diapers before classes begin. We do not have the facilities to change diapers, nor qualified workers to do so, therefore, if a child truly needs a diaper change before the service ends we will contact a parent to come change their own child.
8. **Restroom Policy**
 - a. **Nursery – Preschool:** If nursery – preschool children need to go to the restroom, then a female children’s ministry volunteer should take them in a group of 3 or more children if possible. Children’s ministry volunteers may help with pants' buttons or zippers for children up to 6 years of age if requested by the child. Security team members can assist getting the children to and from the restrooms, but will not enter the restrooms unless there’s an emergency.
 - b. **Kindergarten – 2nd Grade:** Our security team members can escort 3 or more children to the restrooms when necessary. They will accompany children to the bathroom area and wait outside the door until they are finished. Children’s ministry volunteers may help with pants' buttons or zippers for children up to 6 years of age if requested by the child.
 - c. **3rd – 5th Grade:** Children from our older elementary class may go to the restroom in groups of 3 or more on their own with the security team members just keeping a watch out for their safe return.
9. **Physical Touch Policy:** Volunteers must never shake or toss an infant or child. Wrestling, tickling, and roughhousing are also not permitted. Care should also be taken to avoid even the appearance of any kind of inappropriate touch or body language.
10. **Discipline Policy:** A general discipline policy using “time out” or “sit and watch” should be used for children who are misbehaving. If the child is continuously being unruly or causing disruption during a session, the teacher will ask a security team member to contact the parent to come pick up their child early.
11. **Children’s Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy Violations Reporting:** Children’s ministry volunteers will immediately report any other volunteers they see violating the “Children’s Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy” to the children’s ministry director (or the pastor if the

violator is the children’s ministry director). The children’s ministry director will discuss the issue with the alleged violator of the policy and if a violation occurred, the volunteer may no longer be permitted to work with children or youth at The Gathering International Church.

12. **Abuse Reporting:** Children’s ministry volunteers will report suspicions of self-harm or physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect¹ of a child (by a parent, teacher, youth volunteer, etc.) to the children’s ministry director (or the pastor if the violator is the children’s ministry director) within 24 hours. The children’s ministry director will follow the church’s “Process of Reporting” guidelines within 24 hours. If the alleged abuser is a children’s ministry volunteer, then they will be banned from working with the children until an investigation has occurred and they have been cleared of all charges.
13. All children’s ministry volunteers will re-read and sign the “Children’s Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy” annually.

I have read, understand, and agree to The Gathering International Church’s “Statement of Belief,” “Children's Ministry Volunteer Procedures,” and the “Children's Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy.” I understand that if I violate any point in this policy then I may immediately be dismissed from volunteering and may no longer be permitted to volunteer to work with children or youth at The Gathering International Church.

Signature

Date (Day/Month/Year)

¹Definitions of self-harm, abuse forms, and neglect are found on the “Definitions” page of Children’s Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy.
Last reviewed and updated 5/17/22

Definitions of Youth and Children's Ministries Volunteers Safety Policies

Child: A minor from infancy until age 12.

Youth: A minor currently in 6th-12th grade.

Youth Ministry Director: Gregory Vrugink (as of January 2018). The leader of the youth ministry and youth ministry volunteers.

Youth Ministry Volunteer: An adult volunteering to work in the youth ministry.

Children's Ministry Director: Bethany Gilliam (as of September 2019). The leader of the children's ministry and children's ministry volunteers.

Children's Ministry Volunteer: An adult or youth volunteering to work in the children's ministry.

Security Team: A children's ministry volunteer monitoring the halls outside the children's classrooms to assure the church's safety policies are being upheld.

Physical abuse: An action which results in actual or potential physical harm (examples: hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, shaking, burning, etc.).

Sexual abuse: The involvement of a youth in sexual activity with an adult or another child.

- a. **Verbal:** Remarks which include sexual threats, solicitation, obscene or sexually explicit language (whether in person, on the telephone, letters, text messages, or emails) with the intent to arouse or stimulate.
- b. **Visual:** Indecent exposure, showing or taking of suggestive pictures, pornographic material of genitals or chests, unclothed persons, any sexual activity, or stimulated sexual activating such as masturbation
- c. **Physical:** Physical contact or penetration by penis, fingers, or any other body part or object with a person's clothed or unclothed genital, pubic area, buttocks, or in the case of a female breasts or causing a child to perform any of these acts. Masturbation in front of or to the victim, rubbing, holding or kissing for the purpose of sexual gratification.

Emotional abuse: The persistent verbal rejection, humiliation, or denial of a person's worth which results in actual or potential emotional harm and/or adverse behavioral development. (examples: belittling, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, bullying, etc.)

Neglect: The failure to provide for a child's basic human needs (including food, shelter, love, security, medical attention, and education), in the context of resources reasonably available to the parents/caretakers, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health or development. Neglect includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Self-Harm: The act of purposefully harming oneself (examples: cutting, carving, anorexia, bulimia, hair pulling, picking, burning, vaping, smoking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, suicidal thoughts, etc.).