



Children's Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy

Before becoming a children's ministry volunteer:

1. Children's ministry volunteers must profess Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior and have been baptized.
2. Children's ministry volunteers must support the "Statement of Beliefs" of The Gathering International Church.
3. Children's ministry volunteers must have been regular attenders of The Gathering International Church for at least 6 months prior to becoming a volunteer.
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 harm 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 students).
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 – Kindergarten:** Sign-in sheets will be provided each week for all nursery - kindergarten classes. A parent¹ must sign in a child, giving contact information and make a nametag for their child. Parents should be instructed to put their phones on vibrate and told that we will call them should the need arise. Parents should pick up child(ren) immediately following the church service.
 - b. **1st – 2nd Grade:** Sign-in sheets will be provided each week for all 1st-2nd grade classes. A parent must sign in a child, giving contact information and ensuring their child has a name tag. Parents should pick up child(ren) immediately following the church service.
 - c. **3rd - 5th Grade:** Older elementary children begin in the main auditorium with their parents and meet outside the sanctuary doors when dismissed after worship. The 3rd-5th grade teachers, helpers, and the security team will escort them to class. The

¹ A parent or guardian of a minor. We recognize that not all may be parents, but also permanent or temporary guardians. We have chosen to only use the word "parent(s)" to avoid wordiness in the policy.

children must walk in an orderly fashion behind the adult leader. Parents should pick up child(ren) immediately following the church service.

- d. For special family circumstances (such as a parent with a physical disability), the Children's Ministry Director may approve an alternate pick-up person such as a teen sibling or another adult. After approval, the Children's Ministry Director will inform the teachers and the security team coordinator, who will then inform their staff of the approved pick-up person.
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, rash, 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. **Separation Difficulty Policy:** Parents with children in nursery-kindergarten 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. Parents are not allowed to remain in 1st-5th grade classes unless approved by the class's coordinator in special situations.
4. **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.
5. **Increasing Accountability, Decreasing Isolation, & Equalizing Balance of Power Policy:**
 - **Increasing Accountability:** To keep ourselves above reproach, and for the safety and security of everyone (adults and children alike), we will always maintain accountability within the Sunday school teams. We will ensure that each classroom has windows in the doors through which the class can be seen or we will leave the doors partially open. By keeping doors open, ensuring there are windows in our rooms, and/or keeping everyone together – there should never be room for inappropriate touch, misconduct, or concerning behavior observed by either another adult or a child.
 - **Decreasing Isolation:** We will decrease isolation by ensuring there are a minimum of two staff in each class per week and ensuring that children stay in their groups inside the classrooms.
 - **Equalizing Balance of Power:** We will equalize the balance of power in the ratio of adults to children by ensuring the correct ratios of staff to children each week. This means that we should never have one adult with one child alone, or two adults with one child, or a large group of children with only one adult. We should always have a minimum of two workers in attendance, at all times, when children are being supervised. At pick-up time, if one child is left alone in a room with two adults, the staff and child must stand outside the door whilst they wait for the parent.
6. **Diaper Policy:** Parents should be encouraged to 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.
7. **Restroom Policy**
 - a. **Nursery – 2nd Grade:** If nursery – 2nd grade children need to go to the restroom, then a female children's ministry volunteer will take them in a group of 3 or more children. Children's ministry volunteers may help with pants' buttons or zippers for children up to 6 years of age if requested by the child. Only if a child requests help with zippers/buttons should the female volunteer enter the bathroom. In this case the toilet

stall door should always be left open with security standing outside the restroom in the corridor. Security team members can assist in getting the children to and from the restrooms but will not enter the restrooms unless there is an emergency.

- b. **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.
8. **Physical Touch Policy:** Volunteers must never shake or toss an infant or child. Wrestling, tickling, and rough housing are also not permitted. Care should also be taken to avoid even the appearance of any kind of inappropriate touch or body language.
9. **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.
10. **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 report as needed. If a violation occurred, then based on the nature of the violation and at the discretion of the Children’s Ministry Director, the volunteer may no longer be permitted to work with children or youth at The Gathering International Church.
11. **Harm Reporting:** Children’s ministry volunteers will report suspicions of self-harm, physical harm, sexual harm, emotional harm, or neglect² 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 harmful adult is a children’s ministry volunteer, then they will be told to step back from working with the children until a response has been completed, a conclusion reached, and they have been cleared of allegations.
12. **Annual Signing:** All children’s ministry volunteers will re-read and sign the “Children’s Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy” annually. This is to be overseen by the Children’s Ministry Director every August. If no one is serving as the Children’s Ministry Director or this person is unable to fulfill this responsibility, then it will be overseen by the Security Coordinator. If no one is serving as the Security Coordinator or this person is unable to fulfill this responsibility, then it will be overseen by the Background Checks Coordinator.

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)

² Definitions of harm forms and neglect are found on the “Definitions” page of Children’s Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy.

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.

Parent: A parent or guardian of a minor. We recognize that not all may be parents, but also permanent or temporary guardians. We have chosen to only use the word "parent(s)" to avoid wordiness in the policy.

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: Angie Fan (as of January 2025). 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 ensure the church's safety policies are being upheld.

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

Sexual harm: The involvement of a child or youth in sexual activity with a child, youth, or adult.

- 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 harm: 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, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health or development. Neglect includes 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 use, alcohol use, suicidal thoughts, etc.).