

**Bellview Baptist Church
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

**POLICIES AND
PROCEDURES
MANUAL**

**1710 N. Big Spring St.
Midland, TX 79701**

Dear Children's Ministry Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Bellview Baptist Church!

At BBC, 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 BBC volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of BBC. The following procedures have been adopted and will be consistently enforced.

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

Sincerely,

The BBC Staff

Bellview Baptist Church

Safety Policies & Procedures for Children’s Ministry

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Overview of the Bellview Baptist Church Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, BBC requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

BBCs policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to the Ministry Leader. Staff members and 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 BBC staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, BBC requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training (online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the BBC Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- complete the Volunteer Application (volunteers only)
- complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and 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

BBC requires that all staff members and 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

BBC has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteers at BBC 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 the Ministry Leader or the Senior Pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

BBC 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 Ministry Leader and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to the Ministry Leader or BBC staff member. 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. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Ministry Leader.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

BBC staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all BBC policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, BBC staff members and 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 the Ministry Leader, or the Senior Pastor.

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 Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at BBC. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from BBC.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at BBC.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members and volunteers at BBC are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, the Ministry Leader, or the Senior Pastor.

Texas 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 staff member or volunteer *may* report to the Ministry Leader or the Senior Pastor and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Children's Ministry, the Ministry Leader or Senior Pastor will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Senior Pastor will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, the Ministry Leader or the Senior Pastor will inform the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-5400), or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680).

Building Safety

BUILDING SAFETY

The Ministry Leader will be responsible for ensuring that all Children's areas are monitored during All Children's ministry activities. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in Children's areas or on the children's playground during children's ministry activities. Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers 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 that 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

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

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	12
Elementary	2	12
Preteen Camp	2	12

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the Ministry Leader. The Ministry Leader or Senior Pastor will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

DISCIPLINE

It is BBC's policy that staff members and 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, staff members and 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. 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).
- 5) 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.")
- 6) 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 the Ministry Leader.

Discipline Plan

We believe that at BBC discipline is an effective tool to teach and mentor children. Our purpose is to *disciple* children while having realistic expectation of each and every child. We strive to be consistent throughout all of the Children's Ministry Areas no matter the age of the child.

Children's Ministry Rules

Based on the verse Matthew 22:37-39 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart & all your soul & all your mind... Love your neighbor as yourselves."

- 1) *Show love for God.* You're respectful of God's word, you're respectful when someone's teaching you his stories & his lessons, when we are talking to God!
- 2) *Show love to others.* By being kind to others, sharing...
- 3) *Show love to ourselves.* Show love to myself by listening, by being respectful...

Consequences

- 1) Be very clear with the children what the consequences will be from the beginning.
- 2) Progressive
 - a) Be removed from the activity
 - b) Be removed from the class
 - c) Be taken to a staff member or to the Coordinator for the remainder of the session.
 - d) If the child continues to act up, a parent/guardian can be called and the child will not be able to finish out the session.
- 3) When should parents be contacted and by who?
 - a) Parents will always be contacted when child has reached the third consequence and always by the Children's Coordinator. If needed the Coordinator can request the volunteer be present for the conversation for details of what happened.
 - b) In case of any physical/threatening altercation, the child/children involved will immediately be removed from the group and taken to the Children's Coordinator. The Volunteer and Coordinator will then contact Guardians & Parent's at that time in order to sort the situation out.
 - c) All children involved in physical/threatening altercations will be asked to take a break from any Children's Ministry Activities for one week. After the third altercation the child will then be asked to take a break for one month.
 - d) If the child continues to participate in violent/threatening behavior after the third altercation, the Children's Coordinator & Pastor will meet with the parent's/child to determine further involvement within the ministry.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and 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 door will be left partially open.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.

Nursery Registration

Every child that enters into the nursery must have a registration card filled out by the parent/guardian upon arrival. The Nursery Coordinator is to ensure that this information is up to date and accurate. The form will include parent/guardian information, information about the child (including age, food allergy's & special instructions from the parent if any.), and emergency contact information. A child will not be left under any circumstances in the BBC Nursery without a registration card completed.

School age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or 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 staff member or 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

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal/legal drugs while in any BBC facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers in BBC'S Children's Ministry 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.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the Ministry Leader concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

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

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of BBC staff members and 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 Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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

PHYSICAL CONTACT

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

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or 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 the Ministry Leader or the Senior Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or 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 staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministry 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 staff members and 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 staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to the Ministry Leader or the Senior Pastor.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and 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

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministry at BBC are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Children's Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff/volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Ministry Leader prior to the activity.
2. As long as any child is awake, one of the leaders must also be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
3. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
4. In the event of a sleepover that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by staff or volunteers of the same gender.
5. Staff and volunteers will monitor sleeping children by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping children remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff and volunteers should never physically touch a child.

TOBACCO USE

BBC requires staff members and 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 BBC activities or programs. BBC is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. BBC staff members and 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, staff members and 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, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Any time that a child has been entrusted to BBC staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministry staff members or 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 staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately contact the Ministry Leader before releasing the child.

SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs at all times.

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of BBC's Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at BBC.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by BBC.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my ministry position description. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the full term specified in the position description, I understand that my service is volunteer and that I can choose to end this relationship at any time (if possible, by providing two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between BBC and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours that I have worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the staff/volunteer policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page to be signed, detached and delivered to the Bellview Baptist Church Administrator]