

Guidelines for Children and Youth Ministry Workers

Revised 10-5-06

Policy Statement

These policies and procedures have been adopted by BridgeWay Community Church. They will be strictly enforced to ensure a safe and secure environment for our children, youth, volunteer workers, and employees.

Purpose of these Guidelines

To protect God's children. It's important to create a secure and safe environment for the children and youth who participate in our ministry programs.

Grace Period

A volunteer has a **60 day** grace period to complete the application/read the policy and to be interviewed by a Children's Ministry staff person of BridgeWay.

Employee and Volunteers Worker Screen Procedures

All present volunteers must go through the screening process.

1. All individuals who may be working with children or youth must fill out a "Ministry application."
2. The "Ministry Application" will be carefully reviewed by a ministry leader or designee to make certain that the worker will be appropriate for the ministry position, based on the information provided.
3. If the person appears to be appropriate for the ministry work, then at least two of the references will be checked to confirm the information provided on the "Ministry Application".
4. Any information indicating that a candidate poses a threat to others or has prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person will result in the immediate removal of the candidate from consideration for a children or youth ministry position with this church.
5. A criminal background check may be performed through a state law enforcement agency with respect to any candidate seeking to work with children or youth.

Supervision

1. At least two persons (16 years of age, and at least one over the age of 21), should be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area, during nursery and **children programs**.
2. At least two adults (18 years of age, and at least one over the age of 21), should be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area, during **youth programs**.

3. For large groups of children, the number of adult supervision will be increased in accordance with student/teacher ratio requirements, which are as follows:

Birth -12mths	2:1
13-24 mths	3:1
2-3yrs	4:1
4-5yrs	5:1
K-1sr	8:1
2-4 th	10:1
4. An attendance list should be kept for all of the ministry's functions involving children and youth. The date of the function, age of participants, along with the names of all volunteers and supervisors should be recorded.
5. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity and should supervise children/youth in their care.

Security

For Children between ages Birth-Kindergarten

1. All children must be signed in and "tagged" by parent/guardian. Proper check-in procedures must be followed to ensure the safety of the child.
2. A child profile and attendance must be kept on file for all children.
3. Workers are to release children in their care ONLY to persons with proper identification.

For ALL children and youth programs

4. All supervisors and volunteer workers must wear identification.

Discipline

1. Workers are never to use corporal punishment of any kind. (including spanking, hitting, grabbing, shaking, or otherwise physical discipline)
2. Workers should use a firm, gentle voice when addressing the "offense" of a child or youth. Never scream at a child.
3. After several incidences of inappropriate behavior, a worker may have the child take an age-appropriate "time out" or withdrawal from activity (general rule is one minute for every year of age).
4. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the worker's supervisor and/or to a parent/guardian of child. Workers will discuss the child's behavior in private and keep it confidential.
5. An "Incident Report" should be filled out by care giver if behavior is severe or results in injury to self or others, and parent/guardian must be notified. The "Incident Report" should be forwarded to the worker's supervisor.

Physical Contact

1. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety.

Inappropriate physical contact includes:

- demanding hugs and kisses
- touching chest, genital region, upper legs, buttocks, waist, stomach
- sitting child between legs (over the age of 6)
- opposite sex piggy back rides
- seductiveness or suggestive contact
- any touching used to express power or control over a child

Appropriate physical contact includes:

- non-demanding hugs and kisses
- gentle touch of shoulders, hands, arms, head, back
- sitting child on lap (at kindergarten age level or younger)

2. Workers must observe the following bathroom procedures when assisting children:

Teens may not change diapers or take children to the bathrooms.

Infant, Toddler, 2, 3

Diapering should be done in diaper stations and in the close proximity to other care providers; bathroom doors must remain open.

Children that have accidentally soiled or saturated their clothes and do not have a second set of clothing may not remain in the room. The parent will be notified so that the child can be attended to and given the necessary care.

2 to 5 Years Old

Permission is granted to use facility; bathroom doors should remain open; child may require some assistance by adult female workers only.

Kindergarten & Older

Permission granted to use facility. Care provider should check to see if any adults are already in the bathroom. Then, wait outside bathroom door so the child can use the bathroom in private. One adult should take girls and boys to the restroom and for extra security, have someone in the hallway watching as well.

Injuries or Illness

1. Any person (worker or child) who is ill (with a fever, or having a communicable disease which can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable substitute (who has been approved as a volunteer worker through the above screening process) must be used to take the place of workers who are ill.
3. Children should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If this is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the person can be returned to their parent or guardian.
4. Reasonable steps should be taken to avoid contact by anyone with body fluids of any kind.
5. Any person (worker or child) who has received an injury which is obviously minor, should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. A child's parent or guardian should be notified of the minor injury when they pick up the child.

6. Any injury which may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention: The parent or guardian of the injured person should be immediately notified, along with the worker's supervisor. An ambulance should also be called immediately if warranted by the injury.
7. A written "Incident Report" should be prepared by workers whenever an injury should occur during a ministry function. The "Incident Report" should be forwarded to the worker's supervisor promptly upon completion, and a copy should be given to the parent/guardian of the child.

Violation of Policy or Procedures

1. Workers must promptly notify their supervisor of any activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others which violates this policy or procedures.
2. Any supervisor or ministry leader who becomes aware of a violation of the policy or procedures will take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the policy and procedures by all workers; and will remove workers from their position if such removal is warranted, or if the worker poses a potential threat to others.

Notice of Injury, Abuse, or Molestation

1. A "Response Chain" must be identified. Church leadership must specifically name people responsible for reporting and investigating allegations. And inform all children/youth workers who they need to contact to report an incident.
2. Any supervisor who becomes aware of any injury, abuse or molestation connected with any ministry activity will immediately inform a ministry leader of such injury, abuse, or molestation and will complete an "Incident Report".
3. Any ministry leader who becomes aware of possible abuse or molestation of a child/youth will ensure that the parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or molestation has occurred. The ministry leader will also see that an attorney is promptly contacted to provide a written opinion as to whether the church should report the abuse or molestation to law enforcement authorities. The written opinion should be obtained within 24 hours of when the ministry leader first becomes aware of the abuse or molestation, and the attorney's advice should be followed. If the attorney recommends that an incident be reported, the advice should be acted upon immediately.
4. Upon notice of abuse or molestation, the ministry's insurance carrier must be promptly notified, as well as any denominational office to whom the church has a duty to report such allegations.

Internal Investigation

1. Any allegation of abuse or molestation will be taken seriously and will be investigated by ministry leaders.
2. All efforts at handling the situation must be documented in detail and kept in worker's file.

3. Any employee of the ministry who is the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation (unless the employee has admitted to the abuse or molestation, in which case they will be terminated in accordance with church employment practices).
4. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of the investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation.
5. Any person who is not found innocent of alleged abuse or molestation will be removed from work with children or youth within the church. The church will consult with legal counsel for advise if termination of employment is indicated.

Dealing with Law Enforcement/Media

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers will cooperate fully with any law enforcement or governmental agency that may be investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation in connection with activities of the church.
2. Legal counsel will be contacted for advice and guidance as soon as possible after the church receives notice of possible abuse or molestation in connection with church activities. Decisions concerning the ministry's response to the allegations will be made in accordance with such advice.
3. A single church leader will be designated as spokesperson following notice of any abuse or molestation in connection with activities of the ministry. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, and (to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation) will convey only such information as is necessary under the circumstances.

Revision of Policy/Procedures

This policy and procedures will be regularly reviewed with legal counsel and can be modified in accordance with the by laws of the church. Any such modification should be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modification.

