

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY POLICIES

Safe Church Ministry Best Practices



SAFE
CHURCH

Souls Church Kids Ministry Policy Guide

“To inspire our kids to become fully engaged followers of Jesus.”

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Purpose of This Guide

This policy guide exists to create a **safe, consistent, and life-giving environment** for every child, family, and team member within Souls Kids Ministry. These policies are designed to protect children, equip volunteers, and ensure excellence in all areas of ministry

1. Vision, Role & Team Expectations

Team Vision

To see our young kids know and love God, providing a safe and healthy place where they can discover a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ and experience a fun, creative journey through God's Word.

Team Role

Allow the Holy Spirit to use you as you create an environment where kids learn hands-on about the Gospel, receive prayer, and hear about Jesus through media, music, and activities. We also support parents in planting seeds of hope and encouragement into their children.

TEAM REQUIREMENTS

- Must be 12 years of age or older to assist
- Adults (18+) must pass a background check and renew it every three years.

TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Serve when scheduled. Have audio-visual is ready, video cued, and all resources set up 30 minutes prior to service time and clean up after service is done. Attend the Dream Team Huddle before service to receive encouragement, information, and group prayer before we go to our posts. If there is a conflict and you cannot serve, contact your Team Leader in advance and notify your team to find a replacement for your serving shift.

- **Lesson Familiarity.** Look at the lesson plans during the week and pray over the lesson and the children. Learning the lessons each week and knowing the verses allows you to lead confidently & effectively engage in teaching our kids.
- **Celebrate Kids.** Every weekend is a time to celebrate and encourage our children; this could be the highlight of their week. Continually show them Christ's love.
- **Stay Connected to the Weekend Messages.** When you serve on a weekend in Children's, make time during the week to listen to the sermon either at (www.soulschurch.org) or on the app. This will help you stay connected to what is being preached, be encouraged yourself and grow in your own walk with Christ. What happens during the children's service should be an overflow of what God is doing in your life.

Follow the policies and guidelines in place for leading minors. As a children's team member, we ask that you abide by the policies we have in place for working with young children. These guidelines are in place to not only protect our children but also our volunteers on the dream team and provide a safe place to receive life-giving ministry.

TEAM ATTIRE

Souls Kids Team shirt and Dream Team Lanyard. Each member of the Souls Kids team receives a Souls Kids Team shirt. When you serve, wear your Souls Kids Team shirt and dream team lanyard so you are easily identifiable. Dress in a manner that honors Christ. What we wear can speak louder than what we say. Be mindful to not dress in a manner that would distract others or cause them to stumble. Use discretion, if you are not sure about your attire, wear something else.

HOW TO JOIN THE KIDS TEAM

- Complete the Dream Team Application and Interview
- Complete Team Onboarding and Safe Church Training.
- Complete and Pass Your Background Check before beginning to serve.

2. Allergy & Food Awareness Guidelines

For any crafts or object lessons, all food products must be labeled for parents to know what is being served at check-in.

We maintain a nut-free environment. Please remember that no type of nuts, peanut butter, or any other products containing nuts may be brought into the Kids areas. Appropriate snacks are provided in each room. No hot drinks are allowed in any of the Kids areas.

3. Appropriate Affection Policy

We are committed to a **positive, nurturing, and safe environment** that protects both children and Dream Team members. Clear boundaries help prevent misunderstandings and promote healthy interaction.

When creating safe boundaries for children, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise, that decision is left to each individual's discretion. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Dream Teamers to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Dream Team members, as well as staff, working around or with children.

There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders, and arms of children
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children (for a short period of time)
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kissing children
- Holding children over three years old on the lap- men should always refrain from having children on their lap
- Touching knees or legs of children
- Wrestling with children
- Tickling children
- Piggyback rides
- Hugs from behind
- Any type of massage given by a child to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really good in those jeans.”

4. Background Check Policy

Souls Church is committed to providing a **safe and secure environment**. All volunteers must meet screening requirements. Souls Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its volunteers, staff, attendees, and community, so it’s critical that SC volunteers have no history of criminal behavior relevant to their position. For this reason, SC has developed a volunteer screening policy and procedure.

Who Will Be Screened?

Criminal background checks are mandatory for volunteers every three years for those who work with children, the elderly, the disabled, and other vulnerable populations according to State law (Stat. Sec. 123B.03). Federal law (4 USC 13041 (a), (b), (c)) states that an employer may also consider any conviction that may bear upon an individual's fitness for working with children.

Souls Church requires a criminal background check for all volunteer applicants, over the age of 18, who will work with the above stated populations of under 18 years old and anyone who will be working with our first responder/security team.

Volunteer Applicant Rights

Anyone submitting to a criminal background check is guaranteed the following rights:

- Notice and consent prior to the background check
- Consent for minors under age 18 must be provided by parent/guardian (MN Statute 12238.03)
- Notice of negative information before an adverse action is taken (such as refusing a volunteer's application)
- A right to receive a copy of the report
- A right to appeal an adverse decision
- Minors, and legal guardians, must give informed consent regarding how information is used and with whom it is shared (MN Statute 1305 Subd 4)
- Proper safeguarding and disposal of information included in a report.

Volunteer Applicant Responsibility

Prospective volunteers must complete a Background Check Authorization Form. The following information will be collected from volunteers to initiate the screening process:

- First Name, Last Name, Middle Initial
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Address
- Alias, Maiden, or Previous Name
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Phone Number & Email Address
- History of Residence
- Signature authorizing permission to run the background check
- Response (Yes or No) to an arrest or conviction
- Response (Yes or No) to having any pending charges

It is important that any question regarding criminal history be answered completely and truthfully when completing the volunteer application or other required documents. Failure to do so shall be considered negligent or an intentional effort to conceal information and may result in the denial to serve as a volunteer.

Volunteer Qualification Criteria

Souls Church wants to be sure that every decision made about an individual's eligibility to volunteer is correct. SC will carefully consider all the information before any decisions are made that affect an individual's eligibility.

Upon finding a record that may result in an ineligible determination, SC will contact the volunteer to make certain all information provided is accurate. The volunteer's information will be investigated to confirm the accuracy of the information. Following the background check, each volunteer must meet with the Souls Kids Lead to go through a formal interview and upon their discretion, determination and best judgment, a decision will be made about becoming a certified kid's worker.

SC may consider the following factors before deciding whether or not to offer or deny acceptance as a volunteer:

- The length of time since a conviction
- The nature of the crime
- The relationship between the duties to be performed and the crime committed
- The number of convictions
- The relevant moral, ethical, legal and policy issues and principles
- Rehabilitation efforts
- Subsequent employment or volunteer history

Confidentiality Statement

All background check information will remain confidential. We will maintain strict physical, electronic, and procedural safeguards to protect this information. The records will remain in a personnel/volunteer record/file/database, until separation plus 3 years.

5. Bathroom Use Policy

The bathroom use policy is outlined here to be followed during kids ministry on Sundays or at any church kids event:

- Children are not to go to the bathrooms located by the front entrance doors by themselves.
- Before a child enters a restroom, a volunteer must accompany the child to the entrance of the bathroom (but only so that there is always the correct number of adults/volunteers overseeing children in the main space) and ensure there is no one in the bathroom, allow the child to go in, and the volunteer must stay outside of the bathroom.
- Any communication with a child in the restroom should be done with the door closed to maintain the child's privacy.
- The volunteer will stay outside the restroom until the child exits safely and will escort them back to where the rest of the group is located.

- If a child is not able to use the bathroom independently, you must contact their parent/guardian to take them to the bathroom via the “Requesting Assistance” procedure.
 - If they can use the bathroom independently, and the restroom is located outside of the classroom or area of activity, the child must be escorted to the restroom by a volunteer only if it leaves two unrelated adults or one adult and one volunteer 12 or older with the rest of the class. If not, contact the child's parent/guardian to take them to the restroom.
 - Only one child can use the restroom at a time.
 - No adult should ever be in a bathroom or a stall with a child.
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6. Child Protection Policy

We will uphold the integrity of security and safety within Souls Kids Ministry to the highest level, by creating an environment where adults feel confident in dropping off and picking up their kids and where kids feel safe to be in the space.

To best safeguard our Souls Kids Ministry, we practice the following Child Protection Policies and Guidelines:

Two-Adult Rule or Rule of Three:

At least two, unrelated (not family members), screened adults must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

The Rule of Three:

When there is not a capacity to abide by the Two-Adult Rule, it may be acceptable to use the Rule of Three: At least three individuals must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. One of the three must be a screened adult. When the Rule of Three is used, there must be another unrelated screened adult volunteer nearby or in proximity monitoring the group. Additionally, there should be a clear and unobstructed view into the room/space where the supervision is taking place.

Souls Kids Area

The only people allowed in the Souls Kids Zone during service are approved Souls Kids workers. No parents, guardians or unchecked in siblings are allowed in the kids areas.

For those serving in nursery, you must keep the half doors open at all times. No volunteer should ever leave another volunteer alone in the ministry rooms, even when assistance is needed. In those cases, please follow the “Requesting Assistance” procedures by alerting the media team.

Bathrooms Usage

- We will encourage parents upon check-in to take their child to the bathroom before service starts to minimize bathroom use during the service.
- At no time, does a volunteer go with a child into a bathroom. If a child requires assistance in the bathroom in any way, please notify media to alert the parent to assist with their child.
- Before a child uses a bathroom in Souls Kids Ministry or anywhere in the facility, a volunteer should check and make sure the bathroom is empty. Bathrooms equipped with steps stools for children are the three bathrooms located in the Kids Zone area.

During services, adult volunteers should not use any bathrooms in the Kids Zone area, they must use the bathrooms near the lobby. If, due to an emergency or the other adult bathrooms are in use and an adult must use a bathroom located in Kids Ministry, the person is to be escorted by a Guardians team member or another Souls Kids Team Member.

Diaper Changing

- Volunteers do not change diapers at any time. If a child requires diaper changing, please notify media to alert the parent to assist with their child.

Physical Contact

- Adults and volunteers should not initiate physical contact beyond a side hug, the holding of hands, fist pumps or the touch of a head. Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to the following: massages, kissing, frontal hugging, sitting on legs or laps and contact with private areas of the body.
- When caring for a kid within the nursery, often physical contact is required when reading books, playing with toys, and consoling a tired or upset baby or toddler.
- If a volunteer happens to witness inappropriate touching or questionable behavior by other staff or volunteers, volunteers must promptly intervene as appropriate and must report such instances to the Souls Kids Team, Souls Kids Leader, Guardians Lead, member of the Leadership Team, or report it to the Safe Church Committee.

Release of Children During or after a Service

- Only parents with the matching kid's check-in tag are allowed to check their kids out of the nursery or Souls Kids area during a service or following a service.

Release of Information

- Under no circumstance are we allowed to release attendance history of any child to anyone.
- Any Report (Behavior, Accident/Injury, Maltreatment Form, etc.) that is filled out, should never be given out. If a copy is requested, redirect the request to the Guardians Team, who will connect with the Director of Guardians (security).

7. Discipline & Behavior Policy:

When children or youth act out during church events, ministry leaders and volunteers will take care to address the misbehavior in ways that are consistent with the following guidelines:

- Corporal punishment is not permitted (spanking, pinching, hitting, etc.)
- Parents are to be informed whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior develops.
- An aide or parent should be involved in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
- Appropriate types of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff annually.
- Whenever possible, leaders should address disruptive behavior by:
- Redirecting - the child/youth by gently reminding them of our expectations. We guide them by asking for the behavior we would like to see. "It's time to listen to the main group leader, let's focus on the activity together." This can help the child/youth focus on a more acceptable behavior.
- Reposition - If the behavior continues and is affecting the safety of the other kids or the learning environment, we may offer the child a chance to reset by moving them to another spot. This gives the child a fresh opportunity to engage positively in the group.
- Remove - if the behavior persists, we will take the child/youth aside in a supportive and positive way, and have a 1:1 conversation with the child to understand what is going on, and offer guidance. At this point, we will decide if we will have them return to the group or if their grown-up should be contacted.

Questions to ask the child:

- "Can you help me understand what happened? Why do you think we are in the hallway?"
- "What are the expectations we follow here? Can you share what you remember?"
- "How do you feel about what happened? What could we do differently next time?"
- "Is there anything going on you'd like to talk about or share about?"
- **"Before we go back into the room, here are the expectations (state the expectations) - can you abide by this? We can go back in when you are ready to (state expectation.)"**

- Record - if we determine the child cannot return to the room, please follow the “request assistance” procedures and let the Souls Kids Director know so they are aware.

Note: The SK Director should be the one talking with the child’s parent/guardian:

- Build trust by getting to know the child and the family
- Be mindful of body language before diving in
- Choose to remain calm and in a quiet place for the discussion, not in the hallway
- Start by sharing something positive about the child, even if it's about them coming to church
- Avoid labeling or diagnosing the child
- Ask for the parents' insights and suggestions on how to support their child
- If needed, ask a team member to help with the conversation
- Be mindful of where the child is present in the conversation; in that case, include them in the conversation. It would be helpful to have the conversation with the parent privately.

Suggested speaking points (for the SK Director):

- “Today, (child’s name) had some difficulty following the rule/expectation of _____.”
- We really want (child’s name) to feel safe and welcome in Souls Kids. We’d love to have them join us next week, but we think it would be best for them to take a break for the rest of today (or next week.)
- “Next time, we hope to see them make progress and improvement, and whatever we can do to help that happen, we are here to support them and you.”

After the SK Director has had a conversation with a parent, document that we had a conversation with the parents in the SK Drive.

8. Kids Check-In & Check-Out

Guidelines for Kids check-in and check-out process...

KIDS CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

- Parents and guardians need to check their children in at Kids Check-In using the computerized check-in system. Children will receive a name tag sticker, and parents will receive a corresponding claim ticket with a matching security code listed on their child’s name tag. The children will then be able to enter the kids rooms.
- No one can enter the kids' area without a security sticker or Dream Team name badge.

- If a child has an allergy or dietary restriction, there will be a description of the child's allergy on the child's nametag.
- All children will be checked in by an adult and are NOT to be released to anyone other than the adult or a sibling (regular member) with the correct security tag.
- Introduce yourself to new families or kids/parents you do not know by fist pumps when they check in at the Souls Kids kiosk and provide new families with their free gift pack – bible, card, etc., and explain what it is to them. Also, ask new families if one of the parents plans to go into the kids area with their child, they will need a visitor tag for that service, and let them know if there is a diaper change or assistance needed in the bathroom, we will alert the parent with the kids name on the big screen.
- Gather info on families such as guardian's names and phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing address, children's names, birthdays, any medical notes required, and ask the parent to have their child use the restroom before service to minimize bathroom use.

KIDS CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

- Checkout happens at the designated spot in front of the nursery doors and Kids Zone entrance.
- A Kids Team Member will take the security tag from the parent, match the security tag on the child, and remove the tag from the child. Once the tags have been removed, throw the tags away.
- Siblings are allowed to pick up their younger brothers and sisters, if they have the security tag and are known (consistent member) to the kids check out team.

9. Lost Security Tag Policy

Lost Security Tag Guidelines are as follows:

- If a kid loses their name tag, you can simply reprint that kid's tag in the check-in system.
- If a parent/guardian loses their pick up tag or the security numbers do not match, follow the guidelines below...
- A lead teacher will ask for the person's name and ID. They will match the adult's ID with the corresponding name listed on the child's name tag. If they do not have ID, call the cell phone number that matches their name to verify that it belongs to the person seeking a new pick up tag or attempting to pick up the child. If they match a new tag can be printed, if needed, or the child can be released to the adult seeking to pick up the child.

- In the event a parent/guardian loses the security (check-in) tag and comes to check out at the end of the service without a tag, if they are recognized as a known and active adult member who regularly drops off and picks up the child, you can give them a “grace pass” and proceed with checking that child out for that time by asking them to provide the person’s name and phone number listed on the child’s name tag.
 - If a person does not have a tag and is not listed on Souls Kids tag or profile, call for Souls Kids Director or Guardian to verify related family member information in Souls Kids registration and check the notes in the profile for any pick-up restrictions or concerns.
 - Text or call the contact parent/guardian who dropped the child off, or call the parent/guardian listed in the profile. Ask the parent/guardian to text you the name and phone number of the person over age 18 allowed to pick up the child, and only release them upon being shown ID (license or other identifying ID) that shows they are the person given permission to pick up the child, or wait for the parent/guardian to arrive at Kids Check-in. The person seeking to pick up the child must also be able to recite the child’s birthdate and address, and the child should appear comfortable leaving with the person seeking to pick them up.
 - Anytime a child is released to a person that does not have a pick-up tag and is not listed on the Souls Kids profile, we must fill out a permission to release form.
 - If the situation escalates beyond what you feel comfortable handling, invite the Guardians (security team) into the discussion.
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10. Requesting Assistance

Our goal is to support our kids team in every way possible! If you need a parent because of a behavior, illness, diaper change, or any other reason, here is the process:

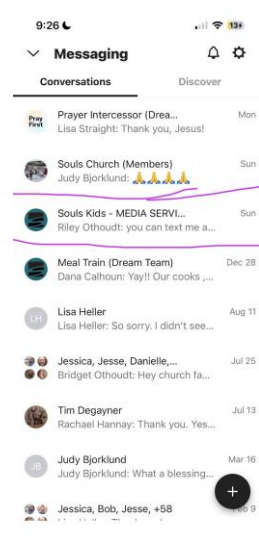
1. a) **If a parent is needed, have an assistant text Media in Souls Church App:** Text the child's **first name and last initial**. Follow the pictures to text Media in the Souls Church App.



1. Open up SC App



2. Select "Conversation Bubble"



3. Select Souls Kids - Media

(Media will put the name up for 1 minute, and again if no one responds.)

Note: Whenever a child's name goes up on the screen the Kids Director or a Guardian member should step out as well to assist as needed. They will check in with the nursery team and Souls Kids team to see who requested a parent and help with the situation and communication as needed.

b) If a parent fails to respond to the name on the screen.

- Kids Director or Guardian can locate the parent in service if they can recognize them.
 - Kids Director or Guardian can text or call the parent via the number on the child's name tag.
2. If other assistance is needed in kids (ex. Need an extra worker, a helper is ill, a plugged toilet etc.) Message Media to put up 000 on the screen. All leadership should know that means help is needed in the Kids area. Someone on the leadership team responds.
 3. Use the radio to ask for help in an emergency or if there has been no response when texting media.
 4. If there is still no response, text people below or send an assistant to get a Lead Team member from service.

Emergency Contacts for assistance:

Rachael Hannay 417-559-0131, Bob Othoudt 320-493-1706, Riley Othoudt 320-262-6994

Jon Erickson 763-458-2510, Dana Calhoun 763-220-9019, Nathan Wheeler: 320-224-9511

Use Radio in case of an emergency

- Say: *I need help in (location) - nursery, Souls Kids, hallway etc.*
 - Call 911 if the situation requires immediate professional care
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11. Transportation Policy

Guidelines for transportation during kids ministry or student ministry on Sundays or at any church event:

Any person who transports a child or youth for any church sponsored event must be 21 or older, have a current Volunteer Driver Form and a copy of current insurance and driver's license on file.

To transport children or youth, there must be an adequate safety belt for each passenger and they will be worn any time the car is moving.

Transportation by one adult leader of one minor should always be avoided. We must have the Two-Adult rule or Rule of Three followed.

In the event that it is unavoidable, the following provisions must take place:

- A clear consent from the parents/guardians of the child or youth is received;
- A clear communication with the youth director or designated volunteer leader when the adult leader leaves with the child or youth;
- A clear communication notifying the staff that the child/youth arrived safely and is no longer under their care or supervision.

Set up alternative driving arrangements to have the parent drop off their child and pick them up once the event is done, with appropriate sign-off and release forms completed.

Final Statement

These policies are in place to ensure that **Souls Kids Ministry remains a safe, secure, and life-giving environment** for every child and volunteer. Every team member is expected to understand, follow, and uphold these standards at all times.