

Village Kids Ministry

Every child seen. Every child safe. Every child loved.

WELCOME TO VILLAGE KIDS

We are honored to partner with your family. This handbook explains what parents and caregivers can expect from Village Kids, how we protect children, and how we can work together to help every child belong and participate.

OUR MISSION

Village Kids exists to create a place where every child experiences belonging, safety, and the love of Jesus - regardless of ability, background, or behavior.

HOW WE PRACTICE THE WAY OF JESUS

- Be with Jesus - creating space for children to experience His presence with attentive, caring leaders.
- Become like Jesus - emphasizing formation over simply collecting information.
- Do what Jesus did - practicing prayer, worship, Scripture, kindness, gentleness, belonging, and love together.

We believe every child should have access to the love of Jesus. Differences are not obstacles to overcome; they are part of the beautiful range of children and families we welcome.

WHAT WE STEWARD

WE DO NOT EXPECT EVERY CHILD TO LEARN THE SAME THING IN THE SAME WAY OR AT THE SAME PACE. OUR ROLE IS TO CREATE A SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE WHERE EACH CHILD CAN EXPERIENCE THE LOVE, JOY, PEACE, GENTLENESS, KINDNESS, ACCEPTANCE, AND BELONGING OF JESUS.

OUR PRIORITIES

Connection	over control
Belonging	over behavior
Participation	over perfection
Safety	over convenience
Dignity	over assumptions

Ministry contact: _____

Phone / email: _____

Service times: _____

Every child and family should leave knowing: “We are so glad you were here, and we cannot wait to see you next week.”

CHAPTER 1

Your Family's First Visit

Our goal is to make arrival simple, welcoming, and predictable for both children and caregivers.

Before your child enters a Village Kids room, we will ask you to provide:

- Parent or caregiver contact information and an emergency contact
- The names of adults authorized to pick up your child
- Allergy, medical, mobility, communication, sensory, and personal-care information
- Any custody or safety information that affects release of your child
- Helpful information about routines, preferences, calming strategies, and support needs

WHAT TO BRING

- A labeled diaper bag or personal-care supplies, when needed
- A labeled communication device, mobility aid, comfort item, or approved support tool
- Any written care plan requested by ministry leadership
- A reachable phone during the service

PLEASE LABEL BELONGINGS

Clearly label cups, bottles, bags, coats, comfort items, communication devices, and personal-care supplies. Village Kids is not responsible for unlabeled or misplaced personal items.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TRANSITION

A brief, confident goodbye is often helpful. Tell the classroom team about anything that may affect your child that day, such as poor sleep, a difficult transition, a new medication, or a change at home. We may contact you if your child needs support that cannot safely be provided in the room.

Check-In, Check-Out & Security

Our release procedures protect every child and apply to every family, every time.

AT CHECK-IN

- Confirm that emergency contacts and authorized pickup adults are current.
- Review allergy, medical, disability, or special support notes.
- Receive matching child and pickup identification tags.
- Keep your pickup tag secure until your child is released.

AT CHECK-OUT

- Present the matching pickup tag.
- Be prepared to show identification if requested.
- Wait while the team verifies authorization before releasing your child.
- Tell a leader immediately if a pickup tag is lost.

SECURITY HOLD

A child will not be released when the pickup tag is missing or does not match, identity cannot be verified, a custody concern is on file, the adult appears impaired, or the child expresses concern about leaving with the adult. Leadership will assist with verification and next steps.

LATE PICKUP

Please pick up promptly at the end of service. If you are delayed, contact the ministry as soon as possible. Children remain under established supervision and release procedures until an authorized adult completes check-out.

Child Safety & Protection

Child-protection standards are non-negotiable and guide every Village Kids activity.

WHAT FAMILIES CAN EXPECT

- **Two-adult supervision** - approved, unrelated adults are present with children; a volunteer should not be alone with a child.
- **Visible interactions** - doors remain open or windowed, and interactions occur where other adults can observe them.
- **Appropriate touch** - contact is child-initiated, age-appropriate, and visible, such as side hugs, high fives, fist bumps, or handshakes.
- **Respectful communication** - children are addressed with affirming language and are never shamed, threatened, or physically disciplined.
- **Immediate reporting** - injuries, safety concerns, policy violations, and concerns about abuse or neglect are reported and documented promptly.

CONDUCT THAT IS NOT PERMITTED

- Physical discipline of any kind
- A volunteer being alone with a child
- Private communication with a child outside approved church platforms
- Social-media interaction with minors through personal accounts
- Asking a child to keep secrets
- Giving gifts without leadership approval
- Transporting a child in a personal vehicle without an approved ministry process

SPEAK UP

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to report any concern to ministry leadership immediately. Concerns are taken seriously, documented, and handled according to church policy and applicable reporting requirements.

Classroom Experience

Village Kids classrooms are designed to be warm, engaging, structured, and actively supervised.

WHAT “SAFE AND WELCOMING” MEANS

- Emotional safety - children are not shamed, rushed, or pressured to perform.
- Sensory awareness - leaders notice when an environment may feel overwhelming and offer appropriate supports.
- Predictability - children receive clear expectations and help understanding what comes next.
- Relational care - every child is treated with patience and dignity, regardless of who is leading that day.

DURING SERVICE, THE CLASSROOM TEAM WILL:

- Welcome children warmly and use their names
- Follow the age-appropriate lesson and activity plan
- Maintain active supervision throughout the room
- Offer approved participation supports when needed
- Check allergy information before serving food
- Report concerns or incidents to leadership before the family leaves when possible

PRACTICING THE WAY TOGETHER

- Children may encounter simple, consistent rhythms such as prayer, worship, Scripture, relational play, and opportunities to care for one another. Shared play and friendship are part of spiritual formation, not merely a break from the lesson.

FOOD AND SNACKS

- Only approved snacks are served.
- Children may not share food.
- Outside food must be cleared with leadership before entering a classroom.
- Families must report all allergies and food restrictions at check-in.

ALLERGY SAFETY

Never assume that a small amount of food is safe. Please provide complete allergy information and talk directly with a leader about severe allergies or emergency plans.

BELONGINGS AND TAKE-HOME ITEMS

The classroom team may send home crafts, lesson materials, or an incident note. Please check your child's belongings before leaving and ask the team about anything you do not understand.

Behavior Support & Inclusion

Behavior is communication. Our first question is not “How do we stop this?” but “What might this child need?”

OUR RESPONSE APPROACH

1. Regulate	Adults pause, breathe, and lower their voices.
2. Connect	We use the child’s name, come to an appropriate eye level, and listen.
3. Clarify	We state expectations simply and clearly.
4. Redirect	We offer a different activity, support, or space.
5. Offer choices	We give age-appropriate options and restore agency.
6. Get help	Another volunteer or leader joins when more support is needed.

INCLUSION SUPPORTS

Supports may include visual schedules, First/Then boards, fidget tools, noise-reducing headphones, movement breaks, calm spaces, simplified language, and extra processing time. Communication devices are respected and should never be removed as punishment.

A child may sit out without being corrected, move without judgment, or engage at their own level. Leaders adapt rather than force, regulate themselves before correcting, and prioritize connection over control. Belonging comes before participation.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

Parents and caregivers should feel seen, not assessed. Differences are normalized rather than highlighted, and trust is allowed to grow over time. Tell us what works at home, how your child communicates discomfort, and what helps your child recover so we can design support with your family.

WHEN WE WILL CONTACT YOU

Leadership will contact you when a child is unsafe, attempts to leave the supervised area, needs medical attention, or continues to escalate despite support efforts. This is not a punishment; it is a safety and partnership step.

Restroom, Diapering & Personal Care

Personal care is provided with dignity, sanitation, visibility, and the least assistance necessary.

RESTROOM ASSISTANCE

- A volunteer should not be alone with a child behind a closed door.
- Visibility and two-adult practices are maintained.
- Assistance is provided only when necessary and within the child's approved plan.

DIAPERING

- Only approved volunteers provide diapering assistance.
- Gloves and sanitation procedures are used.
- Parents are notified when diapering occurs or when additional supplies or care are needed.

DISABILITY AND INDIVIDUALIZED CARE

- The child's approved care plan is followed.
- Privacy and dignity are protected.
- Two-adult visibility is used whenever possible.
- Care needs that exceed the team's approved training or resources are referred to the parent or caregiver.

PLEASE PROVIDE SUPPLIES

Families should provide labeled diapers, wipes, clothing, and specialized personal-care supplies. Tell leadership about allergies or sensitivities to wipes, gloves, soaps, or cleaning products.

Health, Allergies & Medication

Accurate health information helps us respond quickly and safely.

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT:

- Allergies and anaphylaxis risk
- Seizure history or action plans
- Diabetes management needs
- Asthma or breathing concerns
- Mobility or transfer needs
- Communication needs during medical distress
- Any other condition or medical note relevant to care

MEDICATION

Volunteers do not administer medication. Any medication need must follow the church's approved procedure and involve a ministry leader. Do not place medication in a child's bag without notifying leadership.

WHEN CHILDREN SHOULD STAY WITH THEIR CAREGIVER

- Fever
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Symptoms of a contagious illness, including a concerning rash or pink eye
- Any condition that prevents the child from participating safely in the classroom

A HEALTH-RELATED PICKUP IS NOT A PUNISHMENT

If symptoms develop during service, we will contact you and ask you to pick up your child. This protects your child, other children, volunteers, and families.

Emergencies & Incident Communication

Village Kids follows established procedures and keeps children supervised until they are safely reunited with an authorized caregiver.

FIRE	Evacuate, take attendance, and move to the designated assembly area.
LOCKDOWN	Secure the room, silence devices, and remain in place until cleared.
SEVERE WEATHER	Move to an interior area away from windows and await the all-clear.
MEDICAL EMERGENCY	Contact leadership, begin the approved emergency response, and notify the parent or caregiver.
MISSING CHILD	Notify leadership immediately, begin the building search protocol, and pause family dismissal as directed.

INCIDENT REPORTS

Injuries, allergic reactions, elopement, policy violations, and other significant concerns are reported to leadership and documented the same day. A leader or classroom team member will communicate with the parent or caregiver as soon as reasonably possible.

CONCERNS ABOUT ABUSE OR NEGLECT

If a child shares a concern, adults are instructed to listen calmly, avoid investigating or asking leading questions, preserve the child’s words, and report promptly according to church policy and applicable law.

KEEP YOUR PHONE AVAILABLE

During service, keep your phone on vibrate and monitor calls or texts from the ministry. Make sure the contact number on file belongs to an adult who can respond immediately.

Privacy, Photos & Family Communication

We protect family information and communicate only through approved ministry channels.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

- Medical and health information
- Disability or diagnosis information
- Family concerns and personal disclosures
- Custody arrangements
- Behavior support plans and incident details

PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Children are not photographed or posted without the approvals required by ministry policy, including parent or guardian permission. Families and volunteers should not photograph or post other children from Village Kids spaces without explicit permission.

COMMUNICATION

- Use approved church or ministry communication channels.
- Do not ask volunteers to communicate privately with a minor through personal accounts.
- Contact ministry leadership with questions about incidents, policies, care plans, or volunteer conduct.
- Share only the information needed to support your child safely.

CONFIDENTIALITY HAS LIMITS

Information may be shared with ministry leadership, emergency responders, or appropriate authorities when necessary to protect a child or meet reporting obligations.

Parent Partnership & Acknowledgement

The safest and most welcoming ministry is built through clear, respectful partnership with families.

OUR PROMISE AT DISMISSAL

No matter how challenging the day was, how long your family stayed, or how much support your child needed, we want every child and caregiver to leave knowing they are valued and welcome. Our hope is that you hear: “We are so glad you were here today, and we cannot wait to see you next week.”

PARENT AND CAREGIVER COMMITMENTS

- Provide complete and accurate registration, medical, allergy, custody, and pickup information.
- Update information promptly when circumstances change.
- Remain reachable and respond promptly when contacted.
- Follow check-in, check-out, illness, food, and security procedures.
- Treat children, families, volunteers, and leaders with dignity and respect.
- Discuss concerns directly with ministry leadership rather than through social media or other families.
- Work with leaders to create or update support and care plans when needed.

QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME

This handbook summarizes Village Kids practices for families. Ministry leadership may provide additional procedures, forms, or directions based on the child’s age, support needs, facility, or current church policy.

FAMILY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By signing below, I confirm that I have received and reviewed the Village Kids Parent Handbook. I understand the check-in and release procedures, health expectations, child-safety practices, and my responsibility to keep family information current.

PARENT / CAREGIVER FULL NAME (PRINT)

CHILD(REN) NAME(S)

PARENT / CAREGIVER SIGNATURE

DATE

MINISTRY LEADER SIGNATURE

DATE