



Dear Wildwood UMC Family Ministry Volunteer,

Thanks so much for your interest in the Wildwood Children and Family Ministries. We highly value you, our volunteers, and the ministry you provide to our children on Sundays, special event days and weekly programs. We also value our children and want to provide for them an environment that is safe and nurturing so that they can actively learn about the God who loves them.

We have established this Handbook, including our policies and procedures, to protect not only our children but also, you, our volunteers, and Wildwood's mission. These rules will be strictly enforced. It is therefore imperative that you know and observe the rules listed in this handbook.

After carefully reading this manual, including the parts that are specific to the ministry you are interested in serving with, please sign and date the acknowledgment page and email, mail, or fax it back to the leader of the group you are volunteering with.

Sincerely,
Wildwood Staff
6606 FM1488, Suite 148-505
Magnolia, TX 7735

Wildwood UMC Children’s and Family Ministry Handbook Table of Contents

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide policies and procedures for the Children's and Family Ministry of Wildwood UMC and the volunteers who work in that ministry. Changes may be made from time to time in the policies and procedures contained in this handbook without prior written or oral notice.

VISION AND VALUES

Mission

To lead all children to be fully devoted followers of Christ.

Vision

Inviting all kids to know Christ in a way that transforms their daily lives and the lives of those around them.

Values

TRUTH-BASED

We believe that God's word is foundational truth, and it is our heart to train every kid to use it as their guide, authority, and conscience in everything.

RELATIONAL

We believe that life-change happens best in the context of relationships. Gifted, Godly, and passionate adults who exhibit Christ to children, their families, and each other will show kids how to do the same. This modeling will impact God's Kingdom for generations to come.

ADVENTUROUS

We believe that church is FUN and that "it is a sin to bore a kid with the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Therefore, it is our commitment to challenge kids beyond the rules of church toward a vibrant growing relationship with Christ.

INNOVATIVE

We believe in inspiring kids to greatness by pursuing excellence in our programs, risking in our attempts to be innovative, and ruthlessly examining everything we do in order to remain biblical, relevant, and effective.

NURTURING

We believe that spiritual growth happens best in an atmosphere of emotional safety, physical security, and sanitary conditions. We are committed to exceptional standards in these areas.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PROCESS

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Wildwood UMC requires all volunteers working with children to complete the following volunteer application steps. These steps safety of the volunteers and to properly place volunteers into service within the ministry.

1. Application

All family ministry volunteers must complete the **Volunteer Application, Consent to Background Check**, by signing the volunteer application you are agreeing to **up-hold the Doctrine of the United Methodist Church**

2. Reference Check

All references will be contacted and asked to assess the applicant's suitability/capability for working with children.

3. Policies & Procedures

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.

4. Background Check

Wildwood UMC uses, subscribes, and pays for the services of a reputable public data screening firm in order to check the background of all volunteers and employees for possible criminal history and/or registered sex offender information.

Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or have been convicted of sexually oriented or sex related crimes, either misdemeanor or felony, cannot serve in any area of children's ministry. Wildwood utilizes a comprehensive background check and relies upon the truthful answers of applicants and their references for this information.

5. Interview

All Family Ministry volunteers must be willing to submit to an interview by either a Minister or Coordinator.

Wildwood reserves the right to revoke any volunteer's ability to serve in the Children's or Family Ministry with or without notice at any time for any reason or for no reason at all.

SECTION 2: CHILD ABUSE AND PROTECTION POLICY AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Wildwood UMC supports and maintains a **zero tolerance** policy against child abuse and neglect.

Child abuse and neglect includes physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment. Sexual abuse is defined as the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, molestation, prostitution, or incest with children.

It is against the law and against Wildwood UMC Church's policy for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Wildwood UMC reserves the right to refuse membership, to dismiss, or to exclude from affiliation with Wildwood UMC any volunteer or employee who is or has been convicted of child abuse or neglect of any child.

Wildwood UMC will neither condone nor tolerate:
Infliction of bodily injury upon any child or physically or sexually abusive behavior towards a child.

Physical neglect of children, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to church activities.

Emotional mistreatment of children, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks.

Wildwood UMC staff members have been trained to recognize behaviors intended to "groom" children for sexual abuse. These behaviors will be immediately investigated and reported to the appropriate authorities.

REPORTING & INVESTIGATIONS

Child abuse is a serious crime, and Wildwood UMC intends to prosecute child abuse in any form to the fullest extent of the law. You are under these obligations as a volunteer:

1. Reporting requirements:

All volunteers and employees shall immediately report and document any incident of abuse or violation of the two-adult policy of which they have knowledge or which they have observed. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

2. Incident of abuse defined:

An "incident of abuse" means any occurrence in which any person:

Has threatened to inflict or has inflicted physical injury upon a child, youth worker, or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

With respect to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult makes any kind of sexual advance, or makes a request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

Exposes a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

3. Imminent threat:

In all cases where an imminent threat of continued or actual abuse exists, any witness shall immediately contact a staff member to request that immediate steps be taken to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, the person witnessing or with knowledge of the incident of abuse shall complete a written report of the incident of abuse and submit the report to the Children's Ministry (or in his/her absence other appropriate staff or member of the PPR) and Wildwood's UMC legal counsel.

4. Obligation to report to Law Enforcement:

In all cases where any volunteer or staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth, known to the volunteer or staff member in a professional capacity, has been or may be abused or neglected by either known or unknown persons inside or outside of Wildwood UMC, the worker shall make a report to the local law enforcement agency's child abuse investigators within 24 hours of the determination of reasonable cause. If the volunteer or staff member is in doubt regarding whether a report should be made, he or she shall telephone the agency anonymously and discuss the situation with an investigator to determine whether the report should be made. The volunteer or staff member shall make a written record of the name and the title of the investigator with whom he or she spoke and the recommendation made by the investigator, then submit a copy of the written record to the Children's Ministry. This report can be submitted anonymously if so desired.

5. Internal Reporting Procedure:

The person reporting an incident of abuse shall contact the Children's or Student Minister (or in his/her absence, other appropriate staff or any member of the PPR). The reporter shall provide information regarding all relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse. Upon receiving a report of an incident of abuse, the person receiving the report, together with the reporter, shall complete a written report of the incident and submit a copy of the report to Wildwood's legal counsel. However, in all cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom a report should be made, he or she shall be considered absent for the purposes of this reporting procedure and the report should be submitted to another appropriate Wildwood UMC representative and to Wildwood UMC legal counsel.

6. Responding to the report:

When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, he or she shall immediately take steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, and after the report has been appropriately documented, the person receiving the report shall:

Immediately contact the Children's Minister, Student Minister or any member of the PPR who will then contact the parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform them of the incident.

Immediately contact the Children's/Student Minister or any member of the PPR who will contact the Wildwood legal counsel. The legal counsel shall -- within 72 hours of the report -- conduct an investigation and determine (along with the Minister of Children's Ministry) whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the abuse may have occurred.

Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim pending investigation.

Take all steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer is barred from further work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults pending the investigation.

Conclusion of no abuse

If Wildwood's legal counsel concludes that there is not reasonable cause to believe the abuse may have occurred, Wildwood's legal counsel shall provide a written report to the Board of Elders documenting the conclusions reached and the basis for those conclusions. The contents of the report presented by legal counsel where no abuse was found shall be confidential unless requested by law enforcement officials.

Conclusion of abuse

If Wildwood's legal counsel concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse may have occurred, Wildwood's legal counsel shall provide a written account to the PPR.

The written report shall:

Identify the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer, and all witnesses identified and contacted. Set forth the allegations and the steps taken to investigate the allegations. Set forth the facts revealed by each significant witness.

Set forth the temporary actions to be taken by the PPR as well as a recommendation of additional actions to be taken by the PPR.

In addition, Wildwood's legal counsel shall:

Report the incident of abuse to any other appropriate authorities.

Conduct all further investigations as directed by the PPR.

VOLUNTEER/CHILD PROTECTION - See Safe Sanctuary Policy for more details

Wildwood UMC intends to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of volunteers and children. As a precaution and to ensure strict accountability from one adult to another, volunteers must follow these rules:

1. Two Volunteer Policy:

Two volunteers should remain together with children at all times. If a volunteer needs to leave a group of children, a hostess or staff member must be notified so that the two volunteer policy can be upheld.

2. Restroom Policy:

Volunteers should provide assistance to a child using the restroom only if the child is three years or younger or has special needs requiring extra assistance.

Restrooms located between classrooms: One volunteer may provide assistance for a child three years or younger in one of these restrooms, as long the door remains opened to ensure the volunteer is not alone with a child.

3. Physical contact:

Wildwood UMC is committed to protecting children in its care and recognizes that appropriate touch is part of a positive, nurturing environment in a healthy children's ministry. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by Wildwood UMC volunteers.

Using good judgment, the following are appropriate ways to touch kids:

- an arm around the shoulder
- walking around hand in hand
- carrying small children piggy-back
- short congratulatory or greeting hugs
- a brief, assuring pat on the back or shoulder
- handshakes, high fives, and knuckles

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The following are actions a volunteer should NEVER take:

- never touch a child in anger or disgust
- never touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive
- never touch a child between the navel and the knee
- never touch a child's private parts (with the exception of diaper or bathroom procedures)

Physical contact in any form should be above reproach. The personal behavior of staff members and volunteers must foster trust at all times.

Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

4. Sensitive topics:

Certain topics of discussion are best left for parents and their children. If you have a question about the propriety of discussing one of these topics, speak with the teacher or leader in charge of the area in which you serve:

The rapture

The tribulation

Satan - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion

Hell - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion

Denominations

Speaking in tongues

Human sexuality or reproduction

Female menstrual cycle

Drugs, alcohol, or other questionable behavior before salvation

5. Verbal interactions:

Verbal interactions between volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting.

Wildwood 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, 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, volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

6. Visibility & Security:

It is important that all interaction between children and volunteers happens in a location where others can observe what is going on for safety and accountability purposes. At no time should a child and volunteer disappear behind a closed door with no visibility to outsiders. This is done for the protection of both children and volunteers.

SECTION 3: VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCE

Wildwood UMC takes seriously the obligations to its children and asks volunteers to abide by the following guidelines.

1. Arrival:

Volunteers must arrive 15 minutes prior to the event at which they are serving or as otherwise instructed by leadership.

2. Departure:

Volunteers must remain at the family ministry (children to students) event until the last child has been picked up by a parent or until relieved by another volunteer.

3. Absences:

Volunteers are responsible for their assigned shifts. Should the need arise for a volunteer to be absent it is the volunteers' responsibility to secure a substitute. The volunteer must (1) seek out an approved substitute (from a list provided by their team leader), (2) contact their team leader to inform them of their upcoming absence, replacement status, and the name of their replacement.

In the event of a last-minute illness or emergency, volunteers should call the lead staff person and leave a message with their name, time, and location of scheduled service, and reason for absence.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, or any illegal drugs while working with or supervising children at Wildwood UMC.

COMPUTER CHECK-IN

In order to attend Sunday classes, children (infants through 3rd grade) must be checked-in at one of the computer kiosks located throughout the Wildwood facility. The ShelbyNext check-in system will assign the child to the correct class based on their birth date and print the appropriate security labels. For children from infants through 3rd grade two labels will be printed – one to be affixed to the child and one for the parent to keep for pick-up. Parent pick-up tags are not required for children in 4th-6th grades.

Guests to Wildwood UMC will be checked-in by volunteers at the Connection Center.

PROMOTION

Wildwood UMC promotes children to the next class level once each year at the beginning of the school year. Children remain in their class level until the next promotion date unless given specific permission by the Minister of Children and Families.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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

A parent should be called from the Worship Center by a hostess or staff member in the event that the child is completely inconsolable (after at least ten minutes of care), is ill or injured, has a severe disciplinary problem, or is a danger to himself/herself or other children.

DISCIPLINE

Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation and encouragement are always preferred.

Follow these rules for discipline:

1. Consistency:

Discipline must be consistent to be effective. Do not threaten a consequence without the intention to follow through.

2. Response:

Make a prompt and individualized response to inappropriate behavior. Correct a behavior the first time and every time.

3. Resolution:

Seek to both resolve the conflict and reconcile relationships.

4. Reward:

Acknowledge and reward positive behavior. Encourage children who are behaving well and following the rules.

5. Preparation:

Read the lesson before you arrive at your classroom on Sunday. Often the best deterrent to discipline problems is a confident, prepared teacher.

6. Prayer:

Pray for your kids and your patience consistently. Ask the Lord to guide you throughout the class.

7. Discipline Steps:

Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

a) 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).

b) 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).

c) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with a 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.

d) 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).

e) 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. ("Jake, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.")

f) 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.

If the behavior continues, volunteers should contact a hostess or staff member for assistance. The hostess or staff member will determine what further action should be taken (paging the parent, discussion with parent, etc.)

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Ongoing training is an important, effective, and required step in fulfilling your responsibility as a volunteer.

1. New Volunteer Training:

Each new volunteer shall attend one informational meeting regarding his/her area of ministry.

2. Ongoing Training:

Volunteers are required to attend any ongoing training sessions as designated by the Coordinator or Director of his/her area of ministry.

3. Periodic Training:

From time to time, Wildwood UMC will provide training sessions to address specific needs and/or topics of interest for volunteers.

SECTION 5: SAFETY & SECURITY

SECURITY

Please follow these rules to make sure our children are safe:

1. Stranger in the hall:

Only parents, children's ministry volunteers, church staff, and children are allowed in the Children's Ministry area. All other adults (including any other church members) should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the Children's Area. If there are any questions or concerns associated with a stranger in the area, a staff member or security team member should be notified immediately to question the stranger.

2. Child custody issue:

Due to the nature of child custody laws, volunteers must act diligently in making sure the correct people are picking up their children. Please be aware that only parents with custody of their child may pick up the child. If there are any questions regarding this procedure, please notify a hostess, coordinator, or director for clarification.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In case of an emergency, do the following:

1. Medical concerns:

Immediately report any medical needs or concerns to a hostess, coordinator, or director. The notified person will decide if 911 should be called and use their phone to notify the Minister of Children and Families or the main office staff. The volunteer should remain calm and divert the attention of the other children. The victim should be kept quiet and still. Do not attempt to move a severely injured person unless in imminent danger.

2. Hazardous weather:

In the event of dangerous weather volunteers should follow the guidelines below. Further instructions will be given by a staff member or over the PA system. Stay calm.

Move your classroom in a quiet and orderly manner to a bathroom remain in student worship center wing.

Take your clipboard, paper roster, and phone.

Await further instructions.

3. Fire:

The first priority in any fire is that all children and volunteers' safety is maintained. Any attempt by volunteers to put out a fire is absolutely forbidden unless judgment to do so is unquestionable and presents no possible danger to anyone present.

Volunteers should follow the directions below in the event of a fire.

1. How will you know of an alarm?

- a. Audible sound of alarm
- b. Flashing strobe lights in every room

2. What do you do?

- a. Stay calm
- b. Follow Room Ready Procedures (posted in every classroom)
- c. Get your clipboard, paper roster, and walkie-talkie
- d. If you are a volunteer who is not assigned to a classroom, report to the nearest classroom to provide assistance or report to a staff person for further instructions

3. When do you go?

- a. When ordered to evacuate over PA system or by a WM staff member
- b. Or when you are in immediate danger (see smoke or flames)

4. Where do you go?

- a. Follow evacuation map on classroom clipboard (Evacuation maps are included at the end of this policy manual.)
- b. Go to the Blue rally point as indicated on the evacuation map.

Parents may stay with you and assist, but they MAY NOT take their child and leave during an evacuation!

4. Missing child:

Time is critical if a child is reported missing. Volunteers should contact a staff member as soon as possible with the following information:

- a. Name/age/sex
- b. Color of hair, shirt, and skin
- c. Ministry where child was checked-in (stroller or walking?)

The person reporting the lost child should remain with the staff member until further direction is given by a member of Wildwood's security team.

5. Media response:

In the event of a severe accident or death, it is likely that the media will be on site to cover the incident. It is important that all volunteers not say anything which could be mistaken or misquoted by the interviewer. A Wildwood Minister or their designee shall be the only persons to make any statement. If asked by a media member for a statement, please graciously decline and direct them to a Wildwood UMC senior staff member or any member of the PPR.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

I have received and read a copy of Wildwood's Children's and Family Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving at Wildwood UMC.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by My Church.

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

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of the Wildwood UMC policies and procedures manual.

Signature _____

Date _____

Printed Name

Staff Member

_____ Date _____