

West Side  
Kids

West Side Church of God  
Children's Ministries Handbook

Children's Director  
Julie Shackleton

Senior Pastor  
Jerry Dickinson

Dear West Side Volunteer:

Thank you for your time and commitment to our Children's Ministry. Here at West Side Church of God we believe that children are a priceless gift from God. God has a plan and a purpose for every child, and He has gifted you to encourage them in their Christian walk. As parents, we are responsible for the spiritual teachings that our children will hear, but not every child is blessed with a loving Christian home. Every child that walks through the door at West Side is "our" child, and you have the unique opportunity to be a part of their discovery of Jesus Christ.

It is the desire of West Side that you as valuable volunteers:

- \* minister the love of God to each child
- \* provide the highest quality of care possible
- \* create a fun and enjoyable atmosphere
- \* model love and acceptance of each child through your words and actions

This handbook is a guide to help us better serve our church families. Please view it as guidelines that will help us to be consistent in every area of our ministry. We value each volunteer as a vital part of the church's overall ministry to our community and church family. I hope this ministry is a blessing to you, and that the children will be blessed by your love and commitment.

For the Children,

Julie Shackleton  
Director of Children's Ministries

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## The Importance of Children's Ministry

Jesus was teaching in the midst of a great crowd of people. Suddenly there was a rustle in the crowd; a group of people were coming toward Him. They were young mothers and fathers bringing their children to meet Him, to be touched by Him, and to be blessed by Him. His disciples reacted immediately to try and stop the disturbance. After all Jesus was teaching. What He had to say was important. He had not time for interruptions. Especially from children. His disciples were in for a big surprise!

"When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And He took the children in His arms, put His hand on them and blessed them."

What a day that must have been for the children and their parents! No one would forget the moment Jesus reached out to bless a baby or when He bent down to hear a shy toddler. No one was left out that day and the impatient disciples learned that no one would be left out of the Kingdom of God.

It is our prayer that all who enter into this labor of love will have the same heart for the children that Jesus has. A heart that will look to the future and see, just as Jesus sees, the importance of each child they minister to in the Kingdom of God.

George Barna's statistical analysis:

Children between the ages of **5 and 13** have a **32%** probability of accepting Jesus Christ as their savior.

The probability of accepting Christ drops to **4%** for those who are between the ages of **14 and 18**.

Those **older than 18** have a **6%** probability of accepting Jesus Christ as their savior.

## Our Children's Ministry Exist To.....

- ♥ Share Jesus Christ with every child.
- ♥ Show the true love of Christ.
- ♥ Reveal every child's uniqueness.
- ♥ Develop trusting relationships.
- ♥ Provide stability in a child's life.

These goals were written by the teachers of West Side during a training meeting. The topic of the training was Passion. This is what we are passionate about in the Children's Department. We also teach according to West Side's Purpose, Vision Statement, and Mission Statement.

### Our Vision:

*To teach the Good News of Jesus Christ drawing people into a positive,  
joyful experience with Him*

### Our Purpose:

*To partner with God's Spirit to achieve our vision through:*

*Relevance—Ministries that respond to needs, hurts, and interests*

*Service—Active involvement in worship and ministry*

*Unity—Preserving the church community so each person can reach their full potential  
through acknowledging the Lordship of Christ*

### Our Values:

*Practice holiness with love.*

*Encourage Christ-centered relationships.*

*Accept all people with joy.*

*Children are priceless gifts from God.*

*Everyone can change through Christ*

## **Volunteer Requirements**

West Side values each and every child. Because of this value, we feel it is important to screen and train all our volunteers and paid staff that work with our children. Safety is not only a value but it is a priority. We ask that each worker complete a four step screening process.

1. Application

2. Background Check

This is a proactive step to ensure that we are not negligent in the protection of our children. Background checks are done at no cost to you.

3. Reducing the Risk

This is a class that all adult volunteers and paid staff must take. The purpose of this class is to inform volunteers of all safety procedures and abuse awareness. The class will be offered as needed.

4. 4 month attendance

We ask that you consistently attend West Side for four months before beginning your work in the children's ministry. If you haven't been attending for four months, please complete the previous requirements anyway. This allows us to get you started as soon as you reach your four month anniversary.

In addition to the previous screening process, we have developed a few guidelines to insure the safety of all children.

1. Authorized volunteers in the room only

We ask that only authorized volunteers enter classrooms when children are present. The only exception to this rule is for first time visiting parents or parents of children that are experiencing separation anxiety. Anyone substituting in a class must also go through the screening process.

2. Two people rule

We require that there always be a minimum of two volunteers in each room. At least one volunteer must be 18 years or older. These are also requirements of the company that insures West Side.

3. Checking in/out procedures

4. Windows in all classroom doors

This allows parents to observe their children without entering the classroom.

## **Wellness Policy**

In order to protect the children from contagious diseases, we have set the following medical guidelines for the Nursery through 6th grade classrooms. The decision as to whether or not the child should come into class will be made by the lead teacher. If there is any question about the child's illness, it will be confirmed by the director. No child will be admitted into the classroom if they have:

Fever - (currently or within the previous 24 hours)  
Runny nose - (with a colored discharge)  
Pink Eye/Conjunctivitis  
Flu or flu symptoms  
Sore Throat  
Vomiting - (currently or within the previous 24 hours)  
Diarrhea - (currently or within the previous 24 hours)  
Skin rash or Infection  
Strep throat - (Unless child has been medicated for 24 hours)  
Symptoms of Measles, Mumps, Scarlet Fever, or Chicken Pox  
Head Lice

If child is being treated with antibiotics, he/she should be on the drug for at least 24 hours before coming to class.

## **Medical Emergencies**

If a medical emergency (seizures, lacerations, fractures, unconsciousness, etc.) occurs follow these guidelines:

1. Send helper to call 911. There is a phone at the visitor's booth and in the church office.
2. Have someone get the parent out of the service.
3. Have someone alert the Director.
4. Pray over the child.
5. Take the rest of the children to another room.

## **Health and personal Hygiene of Staff and Volunteers**

1. All teachers, assistants, and student helpers that are scheduled to serve in the classrooms must follow the same wellness policy as stated above.
2. Good personal hygiene is important. Our personal appearance is part of the first impression a visitor receives.
3. Wear clothing that will allow you to get on the floor to play with the children and is modest in appearance.

## **Checking In/Out of Class**

We have a token system. The teacher should greet the child and hand the parent a key chain that has the name of that child. Children may not leave the classroom until the parent brings that key chain back to the classroom. Siblings under 13 may not pick up younger siblings. Children are not allowed to go "find their parent", because there have been too many cases where they do not find their parent. It is the **teacher's responsibility** to take the child to their parent if the parent does not pick up their child. The teacher must collect the key chain and take it back to the classroom. The Nursery has the same procedure, but the parent will receive a pager rather than a key chain. We must be vigilant. We cannot afford the crisis of a missing child to encourage us to follow this policy. If a parent continues to neglect picking up their child by a reasonable time, the teacher should inform the director.

## **Fire Exits and Extinguishers**

There are two exits that should be used in case of an evacuation due to fire. The front entrance doors should be used by the 2's/3's class and the Nursery. The back doors by the bathrooms should be used by all the other classes. If there should be a need for an emergency exit from the rooms, please follow these simple guidelines:

1. Remain calm.
2. Be accountable for all children in your care. Take you attendance clipboard.
3. Quietly exit together with all the children.
4. Once outside the building proceed for a distance equal to approximately two building lengths away from the church building to assure safety. Check your attendance to make sure every child is with you.

Fire extinguishers are located throughout the church building in various locations. These locations are:

1. Near the front entrance doors.
2. Near the back doors by the Men's bathroom.
3. In the 4's/5's classroom by the storage closet door.

## Volunteer Expectations

Each volunteer must:

- Be a growing Christian.
- Have a love for children.
- Be dependable.
- Have the ability to get along with other people.
- Be friendly and cheerful.

Before class:

- Promptness is important. Arrive 15 minutes prior to service.
- Greet children and parents as they arrive.
- Have visitors fill out visitor's cards and explain the checking in/out system.
- Ask the parent if there are any special instructions. (Nursery-Feeding, Snacks)

During class

- Take attendance 10 minutes into class.
- Follow all policies regarding wellness, discipline, authorized volunteers, etc.
- In the Nursery, be involved with the care of the babies by rocking the, talking to them, and playing with them on their level.
- In classrooms, follow your curriculum and interact with the children.

After class

- Dismiss children only to their parents or the individual who dropped them off.
- Say "goodbye" to each child and wish the parents a good week.
- Pick up the room. Encourage every age to help you pick up before the service ends.
- Sweep if needed.
- In the Nursery, change the trash bag if a soiled diaper was changed during service.

General responsibilities:

- Pray for all the children in your classroom throughout the week.
- Secure your own substitute when absent. Only people who have gone through the screening process can sub for you. If you can't find a substitute, contact the Children's Director or the Nursery Coordinator. Always let us know when you will be gone and who will be filling in for you.
- Be committed to regularly attend volunteer meetings.
- Attend worship on a regular basis including the day you are scheduled to volunteer.

## **Discipline Guidelines for Infants**

1. If a baby is in the position to possibly harm another baby, move the babies apart.
2. If one baby is curious about another's eyes, hair, etc, just separate them and get them involved in something else.
3. If they both want the same toy, offer another toy.

### Helpful Hints:

1. Do not scowl when you discipline.
2. Be gentle.
3. Please do not raise your voice.
4. Praise the baby for good behavior.

## **Feeding Instructions for Infants**

1. For babies old enough, crackers are provided. Parents must give approval before these snacks can be given. Ask the parent if it is okay for them to have crackers when they are dropping of their baby.
2. Put all snacks away, clean cups, and put bottles back in the baby's bag after baby is done.
3. In an effort to keep snacks from being ground into the carpet, vacuum as soon as possible after snack time. Dust Busters are available for this purpose.
4. Make sure babies are cleaned up.

## **Diaper Changing**

1. Have the diaper and wipes ready to go before placing the baby on the changing table.  
NEVER LEAVE THE BABY ON THE CHANGING TABLE TO GET SOMETHING.
2. Change the baby, and put the baby down to play.
3. Dispose of the dirty diaper.
4. Wipe down the changing pad with a Clorox Wipe.
5. Wash your hands immediately.

## **Pager System**

The pager system is a great tool to help parents feel at ease when leaving their baby in the Nursery. Every parent should receive a pager. Mark down the number on the pager and the baby who is being assigned to that pager. If a visiting parent of a two or three year old would like a pager, the Nursery workers may assign them a pager. The parent is to be paged if a child cries for more than 10 minutes or the child shows signs of illness. (refer to wellness policy) DO NOT release a baby unless the person picking up the baby has the pager. If there is a problem, have someone get the director.

## **Discipline Guidelines for Toddlers**

Try to remember that the goal of a teacher is not to punish a child but to train them.

When a toddler is misbehaving (hitting, kicking, biting, pushing) there are three discipline steps to follow.

### **First Correction**

A gentle but authoritative verbal correction.

### **Second Correction**

A second gentle but authoritative verbal correction with a warning for "time out."

### **Third Correction**

Place in "time out" and talk to the parent when they pick up the toddler.

### **Fourth Correction (after "time out")**

Get the parent involved by getting them out of the service. The teacher is to briefly explain the situation to the parent. They also need to explain that the child may not return to class until the next week.

### **Helpful Hints:**

1. Do not scowl when you discipline.
2. Be gentle.
3. Please do not raise your voice.
4. Praise the toddler for good behavior.
5. Hug a child after you discipline them, and tell them that you love them and Jesus loves them even more.

## **Snack Time for Toddlers**

1. Only snacks on an approved list are to be given to the toddlers unless other arrangements have been made through the director. Food allergies are serious and should be considered.
2. Wash the children's hands prior to eating.
3. Have the toddlers sit down during snack time to avoid spills.
4. Make sure toddlers do not share cups.
5. In an effort to keep snacks from being ground into the carpet, vacuum as soon as possible after snack time. Dust Busters are available for this purpose.
6. Make sure toddlers are cleaned up after snack time.

## **Pager System**

The pager system is a great tool to help new parents feel at ease when leaving their toddler in class. If a visiting parent of a two or three year old would like a pager, the Nursery workers may assign them a pager. The parent is to be paged if a child is inconsolable for more than 10 minutes. Please remind the parent to return the pager to the Nursery after the service.

## **Potty Training**

Go as a group to the bathroom, if there are not more than two adults. If one child needs to go, send them into the Nursery bathroom. If a toddler needs your help, do not go in and close the door to the stall. Always encourage children to wipe by themselves. Help children wash their hands properly after each use of the bathroom. If a child soils their clothes, send for the parent.

## **Discipline Guidelines for Preschoolers and Kindergarteners**

Try to remember that the goal of a teacher is not to punish a child but to train them. When a child is misbehaving (hitting, kicking, biting, pushing) there are three discipline steps to follow.

### First Correction

A gentle but authoritative verbal correction.

### Second Correction

A gentle, but authoritative verbal correction and child is placed in "time out" for a period of time appropriate for the child's age. Parent should be informed that their child was in "time out" and for what reason.

### Third Correction (after "time out")

Get the parent involved by getting them out of the service. The teacher is to briefly explain the situation to the parent. They also need to explain that the child may not return to class until the next week.

If the behavior continues to be a consistent problem each Sunday, the parent will be asked to meet with the director and teacher to agree on a way to modify the behavior.

### Helpful Hints:

1. Do not scowl when you discipline.
2. Be gentle.
3. Please do not raise your voice.
4. Praise the child for good behavior.
5. Hug a child after you discipline and tell them that you love them and that Jesus loves them even more.

## **Snack Time for Preschoolers**

1. Only snacks on an approved list are to be given to the toddlers unless other arrangements have been made through the director. Food allergies are serious and should be considered.
2. Wash the children's hands prior to eating.
3. Have the toddlers sit down during snack time to avoid spills.
4. In an effort to keep snacks from being ground into the carpet, vacuum as soon as possible after snack time. Dust Busters are available for this purpose.
5. Make sure children are clean after snack time.

## **Bathroom Policy**

Suggest to the parents that children use the bathroom before coming to class. This allows more time for the teaching of God's Word. If a child needs to use the restroom, an adult must go with them and prop the bathroom door open. If there is only one adult with a student helper, the class should go as a group. Have children wash their hands properly after each use of the bathroom. If a child soils their clothes, send a helper to get the parent.

## **Discipline Guidelines for Elementary Children**

Try to remember that the goal of a teacher is not to punish a child but to train them. When a child is misbehaving (hitting, kicking, biting, pushing) there are three discipline steps to follow.

### First Correction

A gentle but authoritative verbal correction.

### Second Correction

A gentle, but authoritative verbal correction and child is placed in "time out" for a period of time appropriate for the child's age. Parent should be informed that their child was in "time out" and for what reason.

### Third Correction (after "time out")

Get the parent involved by getting them out of the service. The teacher is to briefly explain the situation to the parent. They also need to explain that the child may not return to class until the next week.

If the behavior continues to be a consistent problem each Sunday, the parent will be asked to meet with the director and teacher to agree on a way to modify the behavior.

### Helpful Hints:

1. Do not scowl when you discipline.
2. Be gentle.
3. Please do not raise your voice.
4. Praise the child for good behavior.
5. Hug a child after you discipline and tell them that you love them and that Jesus loves them even more.

## **Bathroom Policy**

Suggest to the parents that children use the bathroom before coming to class. If a child needs to use the restroom, they may go by themselves, but remind them to be back in 2-3 minutes. Keep tabs on how long they've been gone, because you may have to send someone to check up on them. If possible, ask the child to wait until class is over, because in most cases they are just looking for an excuse to leave the classroom. You must use your own discretion.

## **Snacks or Food Used for Lessons**

Occasionally your lesson may call for food to be used as part of the lesson. This is okay, but please try to use low sugar foods when possible. Food allergies are serious and should be considered. Avoid products with nuts since this allergy has very violent reactions. To be safe, ask the children if they are allergic to any foods before you start the activity.