



StoneBridge Church

Family Life Preschool and Children Ministry Policies

Dear Family Life Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to StoneBridge Church Preschool and Children's Ministries!

Inside this handbook you will find a general overview of Procedures and Guidelines for volunteers and staff members within our Family Life Preschool and Children's Ministries. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, volunteers, and staff, while honoring and protecting the mission of StoneBridge Church. Our goal is for children to grow in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ while allowing our volunteers and staff to safely and effectively invest in their young lives.

Please know we take our policies seriously, and they will be diligently enforced to protect both you and the children in our care. After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Your Family Life Ministry Staff

StoneBridge Church

Family Life Children and Preschool Ministries Policies

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Overview of StoneBridge Church Safety System

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, StoneBridge Church requires all staff members and volunteers regularly working or volunteering in any ongoing or regularly occurring children's activities to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

StoneBridge Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a Ministry Director or a member of the StoneBridge Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers regularly working or volunteering in any ongoing or regularly occurring children's activities should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, StoneBridge Church requires all staff members and volunteers regularly working or volunteering in any ongoing or regularly occurring children's activities to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every three years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers regularly working or volunteering in any ongoing or regularly occurring children's activities are required to complete StoneBridge Church's Screening Process, which includes:

- an Employment Application (employees only);
- a Safety Application (regular occurring volunteers);
- an interview (employees and regular occurring volunteers); and
- references to be checked (employees and regular occurring volunteers).

*A regular occurring volunteer must attend StoneBridge Church for six months before being eligible to serve in on-going or regularly occurring positions which provide ministry services to children.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers regularly working or volunteering in any ongoing or regularly occurring children's activities 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.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

StoneBridge Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in any ongoing or regularly occurring children's activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

Child Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

StoneBridge Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at StoneBridge Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to the Head of the Program, the Child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

StoneBridge Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the StoneBridge Church Safety Committee and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

StoneBridge Church intends to create and foster a culture of communication, reporting safety concerns or policy violations. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Head of the Program, the Child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

StoneBridge Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Family Life Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the StoneBridge Church Safety Committee.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for children, StoneBridge staff members and volunteers, must be aware of each individual's responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the Head of the Program, the Child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in any Family Life or Student Ministry Area. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at StoneBridge Church. If the person is a staff member, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from StoneBridge Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at StoneBridge Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members and volunteers at StoneBridge Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the Head of the Program, the Child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister.

A professional who has cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected must make a report no later than 48 hours after the professional first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected, and may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. Under Texas law, a "professional" includes any individual who is licensed or certified by the state, and who, in the normal course of his or her duties for which licensure is required, has direct contact with children. Professionals include teachers or daycare employees.

Texas State Law requires that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

In addition, a staff member or volunteer must make a report if he or she has cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child, and the staff member or volunteer determines in good faith that disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of another child from the abuser.

The person making a report must identify, if known:

- *The name and address of the child,
- *The name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child, and
- *Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged abuse or neglect.

A staff member or volunteer may report to the Head of the Program, the Child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister, and together, in tandem, make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. In no way is any provision in this policy meant to discourage any staff member or volunteer from *personally* reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to the Head of the Program, the Child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister, as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in a Family Life Ministry Area, the Child's Ministry Director, the Family Life Minister, or the Executive Pastor will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Executive Pastor will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, the Child's Ministry Director, the Family Life Minister or the Executive Pastor will inform the appropriate law enforcement agencies or Child Protective Services, in tandem with the reporting adult (if at all possible). When reporting occurs, persons involved in reporting shall fill out the StoneBridge Safety Committee's "Abuse Reporting Form." The original "Abuse Reporting Form" shall be turned in and kept in a secure location by the Executive Pastor. Other Ministry Area Leaders, if involved in the reporting, may choose to keep one copy in a secure location within their office.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

StoneBridge Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

StoneBridge Church Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, StoneBridge Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee on our campus, which will meet once each quarter.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable StoneBridge Church Ministries and Ministry partners to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee on each campus will be comprised of the following members:

1. Executive Pastor
2. Family Life Minister,
3. Student Minister,
4. Worship Minister
5. Ministry Safe Administrator

One designee shall be from the Board of Directors.

MEETINGS

The Executive Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing StoneBridge Church policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the StoneBridge Church Board of Directors regarding safety issues.

Family Life Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff members and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide Program Heads, Directors and Ministers the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interaction with children.

1. **Each Program Head and/or Ministry Director** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly for which they are responsible.
2. **Ministry Director** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs occurring weekly, which have a Program Head who personally oversees the program each week.
3. **Family Life Minister** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for Sunday Morning programs occurring weekly, and periodically throughout the year for programs which have a Program Head who personally oversees the program each week and a Ministry Director who oversees the program each month.
4. **Family Life Minister or Ministry Director** conducts written performance evaluations every year for individuals in paid staff positions.
5. **Family Life Minister or Ministry Director** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
6. **Executive Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of all Family Life Ministry programs at least once each quarter.
7. **The Executive Pastor** meets with the Family Life Minister at least once a quarter to discuss the Family Life Ministries, including safety training and procedures.
8. **Board of Directors** meet with the Executive Pastor once each year to discuss all Ministry Area's safety training and procedures.

PROGRAM SUPERVISION AND GUIDELINES

Staff members and volunteers in Family Life Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs, unless the program or activity being provided is specifically designed for family participation. Parents and Guardians shall be responsible for their own children unless children have been checked into a specific program or activity under our care. During all Family Life Ministry programs and activities special attention should be given to peer interaction to ensure each child's safety. This should include both their physical play as well as verbal interaction. Children engaging in mean spirited play or bullying, as well as hitting, kicking, and slapping should be disciplined in accordance with our guidelines.

STAFF MEMBER/VOLUNTEER TO CHILD RATIOS

StoneBridge Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Family Life Ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery until walking	2	6
Nursery able to walk	2	10
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	20
Elementary	2	30
Camp	2	30

If a volunteer in a classroom is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the Head of the Program or the Ministry Director. Heads of Programs and Directors will make diligent efforts to place coordinators, staff or volunteers in locations to provide regular assistance as needed to bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Family Life Minister will be responsible for ensuring that the Children's Building, Nursery Area and Middle School Rooms in the Main Building are monitored during classes or programs occurring on any day of the week. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in all Family Life classrooms as well as restrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Children's Building, the Nursery Area, Middle School Rooms or on the children's indoor or outdoor playground during any Family Life Ministry program or class. Family Life Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

On the children's indoor and outdoor playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

When children are playing on the indoor play area, known as the "Meadow" in the Children's building, monitors shall be assigned to both the "Cave Area" under the treehouse, and the "Hobbit House" to guard against inappropriate peer to peer occurrences. Any two children together in these or any other unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground, any time they remain in these areas for more than a few minutes.

After every programming event, the Head of the Program, Ministry Director, staff members and or volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving to ensure no child is left unsupervised.

Off-Limit Areas

All StoneBridge Church staff members, volunteers, and interns will be responsible for ensuring that their children are not in areas deemed off-limits. Areas deemed off limits to children include but are not limited to: Closets, storage rooms, janitor closets, pantries, and areas behind the stage.

Staff Areas

Staff Areas exist in each building on StoneBridge Church property. These staff areas are designated spaces for staff members, volunteers, and interns. Children (other than staff children or interns) should not be invited into or be allowed inside the Staff Areas, unless directed and overseen by a Ministry Director for a specific service project where multiple children will be together for a set amount of time and under the direct supervision of staff, volunteers or interns. The use of the certain designated Staff Areas, may occasionally be required for break out groups. The use of these spaces for break out groups must be at the approval and direction of a Ministry Director. When utilizing these spaces for group meetings, children, volunteers, interns, and or staff members shall travel in and out of these spaces together as a group.

MONITORING HIGH-RISK AREAS

The purpose of this section is to become aware of *high risk* areas at church, and methods to effectively lower that risk. Any areas on church property where children are not directly supervised is a high risk area. In these areas, children can more easily bully and abuse (verbally, physically, and even sexually) each other. It is the responsibility of all staff members, volunteers, and interns to be aware of the potential for bullying and abuse, and to monitor church locations where children can be alone.

For activities involving large numbers of children, staff members, volunteers and interns will be assigned to monitor high risk areas for the duration of the activity. Monitoring of high risk areas will be built in to the programming and planning for these events.

High-Risk Areas include:

- all bathrooms on church property
- night-time activities
- water activities
- changing areas
- under or in certain playground structures
(ex: Cave, Hobbit House, outside under the large play structure)

During programs if chairs, mats, sleeping bags, or bean bags are used by the children, then only one child per chair, mat, sleeping bag or bean bag will be permissible. With the exception of children in our Nursery and Preschool, adults should not have children sitting in their laps during any Family Life program.

RESTROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their restroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- 1) Only female staff members or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be noted for use ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.").
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only unless the size of the child prohibits it's use. In these instances the changing pad should be placed on the floor to change the child's diaper.

Toilet Training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female staff members or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, it shall be performed by a trained staff member. When possible, another staff member or volunteer should be present.
- 4) Toilet stall doors will be left open when assisting children.
- 5) When children are taken into the restroom the main entry door will be left open.
- 6) Only one child should be allowed in each stall.
- 7) Young children will never be left unattended in a restroom.
- 8) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with our childcare staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be noted for

use (“Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”).

- 9) “Accidents” should be handled by female childcare staff members reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the children’s area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.
- 10) Female childcare staff members assisting children after an “accident,” when doing so in the restroom, shall leave the stall door partially or fully open and another staff member should be present when possible.
- 11) All children and adults are expected to wash their hands before leaving the restroom.

Grade School Age Children

The restrooms in our StoneShire Children’s Building are reserved for exclusive use by children during any of our child specific programs. General Adult use is prohibited during these times, for the safety of the children in our care. Parents are permitted to enter these restrooms with their own children during drop off and pick-up only. Parents of children needing to use the restrooms after dropping off or picking up their children should do so in the main building restrooms. Volunteers or staff members needing to use the restroom shall when possible do so before entering the children’s building. Female Volunteers or female staff members may use the restrooms in the children’s building in an emergency. Male volunteers and staff members are not permitted to utilize the restrooms in the children’s building and must go to the main building to use the restroom.

School age children should be monitored when going to the restroom by a staff member or volunteer. Male staff members and male volunteers should never take a lone child into the restroom. However, male staff members and male volunteers may be asked to check on boys in the restroom by the child’s Ministry Director or Head of a Program. When this occurs the Head of the Program, Ministry Director, or another volunteer should be at the entrance of the restroom for the safety of the male volunteer or staff member.

Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed in the restroom based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should verbally communicate with children while they are in the restroom, (ex: Are you okay in there?) especially when more than one child is present. Female staff members or female volunteers should check to ensure only one child is in each toilet stall if multiple children enter the restroom. Staff members or volunteers should then wait outside the restroom for each child to return.

When a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, they should seek out another staff member or volunteer to accompany him/her. If the child requires assistance, the staff member or volunteer should leave the exterior restroom door open (when utilizing the main building) when entering the restroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the restroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer. Staff members or volunteers should not employ the help of their spouse when assisting a child in the restroom if at all possible.

Middle School Age Children

Middle school age children primarily use the public restrooms in our Main Building on campus. Staff members, volunteers and interns, should be aware of when Middle school age children are going to the restroom.

Groups of children going to the restroom at once should be avoided when possible. When groups of children are required to go, staff members, volunteers and interns, should stand at the door of the restroom and engage in conversation with children (ex: Hurry up guys) and to make sure no bullying or inappropriate conversations occur. Also, always check to see that only one child is in each stall.

Male staff members and male volunteers should avoid the use of our public restrooms upstairs during our middle school programs so as not to be alone with a middle school age child in the restroom.

Children should require no assistance unless it is an emergency. In an emergency in which a child does need assistance, volunteers and interns shall notify the Head of the Program or Ministry Director to assist the child.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual middle schooler, they should seek out another staff member or volunteer to accompany him/her. If the middle schooler requires assistance, the staff member or female volunteer should leave the exterior restroom door open (when utilizing the main building) when entering the restroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the restroom stall. Staff members and volunteers should not employ the help of their spouse, if possible, when assisting a middle schooler in the restroom.

Special Needs Aged Children

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals unless written approval has been given by the parent or guardian. In these instances, the Head of the Program will change the diaper, and may recruit the assistance of another trained volunteer if the size of the child mandates assistance.

Off-site Event Restroom Use by Children of All Ages

Children in our care during an off-site event or program should be monitored when going to the restroom by a staff member or volunteer. While at a public event location, staff members and volunteers should be positioned to ensure a child utilizing a public restroom can be monitored for safety.

If staff members, volunteers, or interns take a child to a public restroom, the staff members, volunteers, or interns should stand where they can monitor the safety of the child. Staff members, volunteers, and interns should check to ensure only one child or person is in each toilet stall of the restroom. Never take a lone child into a restroom stall.

Staff members and volunteers should occasionally verbally communicate with children while they are in the restroom, (ex: Are you okay in there?) especially when other adults are present with the child. Staff members and volunteers shall stand in the entry door or entry

area to ensure the safety of the child(ren) when other individuals are also utilizing the public restroom, until the child returns.

Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed in the restroom based upon their individual capabilities. If the child requires assistance, the staff member or volunteer should try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the restroom stall.

UNOBSERVED ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN

No child will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during a Family Life Ministry program or activity of which children have been received into our care by a parent or guardian. StoneBridge Church staff members, volunteers, and interns are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member, volunteer, or intern finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member, volunteer, or intern will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

Example: If a child desires conversation or counsel with a staff member, volunteer, or intern after regular programming has concluded, the staff member, volunteer or intern shall relocate the discussion to a place where other staff members, volunteers or interns are present, or which is easily observed.

APPROPRIATE ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

StoneBridge Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of children may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to meet with them on an individual basis. Staff members, volunteers, and interns should observe the following guidelines when interacting with children.

Staff members, volunteers and interns should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual child at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. All one-to-one meetings should take place in public locations, easily observed by others.

In the event a closed-door meeting must occur, the staff member must inform another staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked. Staff members shall meet with children that is easily seen into by others passing by, Staff members are required to select rooms to meet with children that have a glass sidelight or glass panel in the door. No room shall ever be used to meet in that is considered “off limits” or in a building and an area of the building that is NOT being used at the time. (See Building Safety)

BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying will not be tolerated. It should be made clear at every program that verbal, physical or emotional harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. At the first sign of verbal or other attacks, act decisively. There is no “harmless putdown” when dealing with kids.

- a. First instance comes with a warning to the child and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is inappropriate. Make sure not to embarrass or chastise them.
- b. Second instance requires that you pull the offending child(ren) from the group and discuss the inappropriateness of bullying behavior. Set some clear parameters and behavioral goals for them to achieve. However, let them know that the next step is a visit to the Head of the Program or Ministry Director. Notify the Head of the Program or Ministry Director of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.
- c. Make sure that any child who is the brunt of bullying attacks is handling the situation well. Have a private dialogue with him or her to assess the situation. **DO NOT SINGLE CHILDREN OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP!** Be discreet and protect their dignity.
- d. Third instance results in a trip to the Head of the Program or Ministry Director and a conversation with the parents.

SLEEPING DURING OVERNIGHT EVENTS

During overnight events children will fall asleep, when this occurs staff members, volunteers and interns will strictly observe the following rules:

1. Any overnight event will provide designated safe sleeping areas.
2. Where one child falls asleep at an all-night event, the child will be directed to a quiet public area, and at least one staff member must be assigned to maintain visual contact with the sleeping child.
3. At least one staff member, volunteer, or intern is required to be in any sleeping area with children at all times. Even if it appears that all children are sleeping, at least one staff member, volunteer or intern, will not leave the sleeping area. At NO TIME is it permissible for children to be left alone sleeping in a room during a Family Life Event.
4. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn. Children who fall asleep during overnight events (excluding weekend retreats) shall remain in their street clothes.
5. When the lights are off, staff members, volunteers, and interns should never physically touch a child and a night light shall remain on in the room.
6. Children will not share a bed, bunk or sleeping bag with another child, staff member, volunteer or intern. Each staff member, volunteer, intern and child will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed. Children (not interns) may sleep on top of a double bed or larger provided each child is in a separate sleeping bag.

PRIVACY DURING OVERNIGHT EVENTS OR CAMPS

Children participating in overnight events in homes or camps shall be provided with designated restrooms facilities for their use. When in a home, these restrooms shall not be used by household members unless it is a child participating in the event.

Children should be allowed appropriate privacy when using a restroom and shower. Children should be instructed to change into their sleep attire while in the restroom and before they come out. Only one child should be in any toilet and or shower area at a time.

NUDITY

Staff members, volunteers and interns at StoneBridge Church should never be nude or in their underwear in the presence of children in their care. Specific plans for handling changing of clothes and sleeping arrangements for all overnight events will be the responsibility of each Ministry Director and will be in accordance with our policies herein.

Children should be instructed not to allow anyone to see them nude as well. No child should ever be allowed to expose themselves to others. If this occurs, the child will need to speak to the Head of the Program or Camp, Ministry Director, or the Host Home Parent Volunteer.

DISCIPLINE

It is our policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) 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).
- 2) 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).
- 3) When a young child is physically out of control, and unable to be verbally consoled, an adult should gently but firmly remove the child while they attempt to settle down the child.
- 4) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with 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 a child in time-out once they can be set down.

- 5) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a “spot” to sit on until their time-out is complete.
- 6) 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).
- 7) 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. (“Jamie, you’re doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.”)
- 8) 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.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to parents and the Head of the Program and or Child’s Ministry Director.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and 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, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

StoneBridge Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, StoneBridge Church has implemented a ‘physical contact policy’ that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in any Family Life Ministry program or camp

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children’s development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to the Head of the Program, the child’s Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Family Life Ministry staff members

and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Family Life Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the Head of the Program, the child's Ministry Director or the Family Life Minister.

MEDICATION

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in our Family Life Ministry unless it is under the following conditions:

1. Child's parent or guardian has provided us with the child's medical device for medical emergency (ex: epi-pen, inhaler).
2. Head of the Program or Ministry Director has been notified that an emergency is occurring with a child in their care.
3. Person administering the medical device has been trained on its use.

Or during a church camp or special program, a trained medical professional is on hand to administer first aid and the following has occurred.

1. Child's parent or guardian has provided us with the child's medical release and has agreed to the administration of certain drugs.
2. Child's parent or guardian has provided us with the child's medical device for medical emergency (ex: epi-pen, inhaler).

During any event in which a child is required to receive emergency medical assistance, the child's Ministry Director and or the Family Life Minister should be notified.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid ministry transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport. Two staff members shall transport a lone child when possible. When it becomes necessary for one staff member to transport one child, the staff member must contact the parent. Parents must authorize any one on one transportation of their child. Staff members shall text or call Parents and their Ministry Director to verify exactly when the child is in transport, so that the parent can verify the time their child should reach their destination.
3. Staff members, volunteers and adult interns when transporting high school age interns shall have at least three people in the vehicle. If it is necessary to have one staff member, volunteer, or adult intern in the car with one high school age intern, then approval by the Ministry Director or Family Life Minister will be required. Failure to request approval could result in the dismissal of employment, volunteer position or internship within the Middle School Ministry.
4. At NO time should a staff member, volunteer, or adult intern be alone in a car with a high school intern of the opposite sex. Failure to comply with this policy will result in immediate dismissal.
5. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
6. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by or used for StoneBridge Church, unless in an emergency. In other non-emergency circumstances, staff members, volunteers, and interns are to stop the vehicle before using a cell phone.
7. Absolutely NO TEXTING is allowed by the driver of a moving vehicle used by StoneBridge Church.
8. No drivers under age 21 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.
9. When staff members, volunteers, or interns have been requested to perform reasonable functions of close family friendships or by extenuating circumstances (illness in the family, job, etc see section entitled Family Relationships.) such as dropping off a neighbor's child to their home, the staff member, volunteer or intern will be required to contact the parent or guardian before they leave the activity premises so that the parent or guardian is made aware they are leaving, and is still in agreement with their earlier request and knows the time of estimated arrival. When a child is dropped off at the home, the parent or guardian should be texted or called prior to driving off in order to verify the child is home and the parent is aware.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of StoneBridge staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in a Family Life programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe or be a part of all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete StoneBridge Church's volunteer application and screening process.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Staff members are expected to have normal friendships with their neighbors and church families. At no time are our policies intended to prohibit reasonable interaction between friends and neighbors. However, because we expect our staff members to live above reproach, we have limited some interactions as outlined below:

1. Staff members may not volunteer or solicit to house sit with children present in the home while parents are away. However, parents at their discretion may approach and ask staff members to house sit when they are gone and their children will be present. When this order of events occur, staff members are allowed to say yes, if they so desire. **Staff members are not allowed to initiate the discussion.**
2. Staff members may not invite children to their home unless it is for the sole purpose of allowing their own children to play together in their home.
3. Staff members whose neighbor attends the church may engage in car pooling of children.
4. Staff members may assist other staff members with their families in appropriate and normal circumstances.

In these instances, staff members shall initiate conversations with the parents regarding their accountability as someone in ministry at StoneBridge Church. Our church friends should be made aware of who oversees you at StoneBridge Church should they ever have a concern regarding your behavior. Furthermore, it shall be the responsibility of the staff member to communicate to their Ministry Director any oversight or involvement with children that will be occurring outside our church ministry settings including but not limited to as a part of a friendship with a family or neighbor.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children under the age of 13, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

Staff members who oversee our teenage volunteers or are engaged in the student ministry of StoneBridge Church may be, from time to time, called upon to discuss biblical age appropriate and healthy sexually oriented conversations. This permission in no way allows

the staff member to engage in inappropriate or explicit information about their own sexual activities.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members, volunteers and interns at StoneBridge Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials or images (magazines, cards, phone pics, videos, etc.) at StoneBridge Church or in the presence of children in their care. Staff members, volunteers, and interns found to possess any sexually oriented materials or images will be in violation of this policy and grounds for termination of a staff member, or dismissal of a volunteer or intern.

TOBACCO

StoneBridge Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during StoneBridge Church activities or programs. StoneBridge Church is a tobacco-free facility.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any StoneBridge Church program or activity. Any staff members who is arrested for Driving while under the Influence or Intoxicated while an employee of StoneBridge Church may be subject to termination. In the event a staff member is allowed to continue after an arrest, any repeated offense or breach of any policy will result in their immediate termination.

INTERNET/ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Although filters are installed on all StoneBridge Church computers for the church's protection, No computer at or related to StoneBridge Church is to be used by staff members, volunteers, children or volunteers to engage in computer chat room discussions or visit pornographic or sexually inappropriate websites.

Electronic Communication with Children

Staff members, volunteers and interns are not permitted to communicate one on one through social media with any child under the age of 13. Phones or texting with teenagers, age 13 or older, who are working in one of our Family Life Ministries as an interns is allowed to be contacted provided the parent has agreed to the interaction. Staff members should limit one to one texting or phone conversations with teenagers who work in their ministry area. Group texts should be utilized whenever possible. Encouragement follow-up texts an event or program should occur directly following the activity. At no time should the text or phone call involve inappropriate language, sexual innuendos, or sexually graphic photos as outlined in previous sections of our policies herein.

If phones are being utilized by a ministry department to promote attendance at a program or activity, parents shall be contacted first, to authorize consent before engaging a child in a conversation.

Conversations shall be limited to those scripted by the Ministry Director for promotion and attendance. Conversations should take place in the Family Life Offices or designated work area in the presence of others. No one on one outside the office contacting by phone, text or social media by staff members, volunteers, or interns with children under the age of 13 and who are in one of our Family Life Ministry areas should be made and is grounds for dismissal as a volunteer and termination as a staff member or intern.

Electronic communication with Interns and Teenage Volunteers or Childcare Staff shall be limited to phone, text or email. Parents shall be contacted prior to initiating any form of electronic communication for approval. Once approval has been made, appropriate communication for work purposes can commence. Staff members, volunteers, and adult interns are encouraged to communicate using group texts when possible.

If an Intern or Teenage volunteer reaches out to a staff member, volunteer, or adult intern via text or email regarding a personal matter. Staff members, volunteers and adult interns are expected to immediately let the teenager know you cannot communicate with them right then, however, you are happy to meet with them to discuss their problem.

Children in our care are prohibited from using electronic devices. Children who need to contact their parents on their cell phones must do so in the presence of a staff member, volunteer, or intern.

Online Gaming

From time to time staff members maybe involved in their own free time activity of gaming online when someone in their ministry areas sees they are participating in online gaming and contacts to join in. Staff members and interns may engage in these activities with children in our ministry, provided their parent or guardian has agreed to the interaction, and the game being played is age appropriate for the child contacting you. At no time should staff or interns reach out to children in our ministry area to play unless it is an organized gaming activity being hosted by one of our ministry areas which the staff member or intern is involved.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to a Family Life Ministry staff member or volunteer, the Church incurs reasonable responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Family Life Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. Our nursery, preschool and children ministries provides an extra layer of security and parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians to pick up this age child will be required to produce a corresponding security tag.

For grade school age children, it is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child. Grade school age children may not be released to individuals under the age of 18, unless extenuating circumstances along with explicit consent has been

provided by the parent or guardian. To the Head of the Program, the child's Ministry Director, or volunteer.

Certain programs like day camps, may require very specific pick-up requirements as deemed necessary for the safety of the children in our care.

In the event staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact the Head of the Program or the child's Ministry Director before releasing the child.

Sometimes one child may be the last to get picked up after a program or activity. If this occurs during normal working hours, then staff members, volunteers and interns shall place the child under the care of the StoneBridge Church receptionist at the front desk. The child shall remain there in public view until picked up by their parent or guardian. If it is after working hours then at least two staff members, volunteers or interns shall wait for the child's parent or guardian to pick them up.

Child Contact Policy for Current and Former Staff

COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN OUTSIDE OF CHURCH

The StoneBridge Church safety standards established to protect children and insure healthy relationships during church programs and activities should be respected outside of church as well. In addition to church programs and activities safety standards, the following policies should be respected in all interactions with children occurring outside of the church setting.

1. Parents of all children must approve any and all interactions with their child, including but not limited to: email, social network interactions, phone calls, personal visits. No interaction should ever take place without the knowledge and approval of the child's parents or guardian.
2. If a child requests to be a "friend" on Facebook or similar social networking sites, permission from parents should be granted before accepting these offers.
3. Current or former staff members and interns should never be alone with a child in an unobserved context or location. This is a policy which takes on even more importance outside of church.
4. Current or former staff members and interns should limit connections by gender. Current or former male staff members and interns should not initiate or maintain contact with female children. Current or former female staff members or interns should not initiate or maintain contact with male children. Dating relationships of any kind between staff members, interns or volunteers and a child are strictly prohibited.
5. If a family invites a current or former staff member or intern to visit, these visits should not involve spending the night at the child's home. (See Family Relationships for Exceptions)

6. Current or former staff members or interns should never invite a child to spend the night at their home. The only exceptions to this rule would be when a current or former staff members whose own children are inviting their friends to spend the night in their home.
7. Just like at church, if a child shares information that puts them or anyone else in danger, the parents of that child should be notified immediately. When in doubt, err on the side of caution, and contact anyone on the StoneBridge Church Safety Committee for counsel.

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of StoneBridge Church's Family Life Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at StoneBridge Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Stonebridge Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my Family Life Minister or Director.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between StoneBridge Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of StoneBridge Church policies and procedures manual.

**YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN THIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE
BY CLICKING HERE**

Please have the "REVISED" date listed in the bottom right corner of this page, you will need it to sign the document. Login using the same username and login that you use to register for events at Stonebridge.



STONEBRIDGE CHURCH

— Family Life Ministries —

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