



615 Wright Avenue Richland, Washington 99352
509.946.4656 www.westside1.org

Children & Family Ministry Child Security Guidelines

PURPOSE

In accordance with West Side Church's Statement of Policy regarding security for children and all those involved in children's ministries, it is the intent of these guidelines to (1) protect the physical safety and spiritual welfare of children while they are engaged in programs, projects, or ministries of the church, and (2) establish expectations and procedures for employees and volunteers for ensuring a safe environment for our children.

RATIONALE

The rationale for formulating guidelines is to communicate more detailed CFM-specific expectations (or requirements) for implementing the West Side church security policy. **Our primary goal is to present and represent Jesus.** To this end these guidelines: (1) strive for a balance between ways in which leaders/teachers can express genuine feelings and give appropriate care toward those in their charge without behaviors that infringe on the rights of others; and (2) encourage those working with children to be unafraid to show love to them in a way that will not be misunderstood.

DEFINITIONS

An "adult" is defined as a person who is 18 years of age or older and is no longer attending high school. This person will have been screened and trained by West Side Church.

A "teenage worker" is defined as a person who is 16 or 17 years of age, or 18 years of age and still in high school, who has been screened and trained by West Side Church.

"Children" in CFM ministry include infants through 5th grade.

GUIDELINES

1. Application Packet

It is the responsibility of CFM staff and volunteers in Childcare and Sunday School Coordination roles to see that the application packet is distributed to prospective volunteers and to see that the completed packet is returned to the Child Security Administrator for nationwide background screening. The Application packet includes:

- The West Side Church Child Security Policy
- The CFM Child Security Guidelines
- Acknowledgment of Receipt of the Policy and Guidelines
- Application for Children/Youth Work (which includes data for nationwide background screening)
- Applicant Disclosure

2. Creating and Maintaining a Safe and Secure Environment

Encourage appropriate interaction; stop any hitting, biting, wrestling, rough play, name calling, swearing, "mean" teasing, etc.

No physical punishment, ridicule, or empty threats.

Remove anything in the physical environment which, realistically, could be a threat to safety.

Refrain from telling a child "not to tell" an adult anything. (If making a gift for parents, term it a "surprise" rather than a secret.)

Use appropriate physical contact; touch can convey either great warmth or discomfort. Examples:

Acceptable Touch

- gentle, firm touch
- arms
- shoulders
- backs
- knees and below the knee
- hands
- tops and backs of head

Unacceptable Touch

- stroking touch
- upper thigh
- under clothing
- genitalia
- bottoms (unless diapering)
- female breast area
- any touch listed in the "acceptable" area that makes a child uncomfortable
- tickling

If restraining a child is necessary, do so in the least forceful and restrictive manner possible that will still be effective.

If a child shies away from any touch (even an "acceptable" touch) or says "NO" - respect their wishes.

Don't try to tease a child into "submitting" to your touch, no matter how innocent it may seem.

Hold the young child with your forearm, rather than your hand, under his/her bottom.

3. Ministry Classrooms

For safety and security, all childcare and classroom situations will have either two adults or one adult and one teenage worker present. Juveniles 12 to 15 years of age can be helpers but they cannot be counted as one of the screened and trained workers.

Parents are welcome to participate or observe in their child's church activities.

At times, it may be necessary for one childcare worker to leave the room briefly (e.g. taking a child to the bathroom; reporting a situation to the paging station workers; or taking a child to the "comforter" during Pathfinders, etc.). The door to the classroom needs to remain open while that second childcare worker is out of the room.

In one-on-one situations where one child is taken out of the room, be brief and stay in areas that are open and observable.

If only one childcare worker is available, groups may be combined with another close in age group (2's & 3's with 4's & 5's or nursery with 2's, for example) in order to have 2 adults or one adult and one teenage worker present.

4. Paging Station & Check In and Out Procedures

All persons bringing newborns through kindergarten age children for childcare or Sunday School must check-in at the paging station on arrival. They are to pick up a pager and place a name tag on the child.

Parents are requested to carry the pager during the time their child is under care or in class.

Pagers and name tags are to be returned to the paging station at the end of church activities (childcare/Sunday School).

Only persons identified on the child's nametag (for newborn through kindergarten age) will be allowed to pick up children from their classrooms. Caregivers/teachers need to be alert to whose picture is on the name tag.

Parents of all children are requested to notify the caregiver/teacher when they are taking their child.

5. Bathrooms

When taking a young child to the bathroom, the accompanying childcare worker/teacher needs to wait outside the bathroom stall with the outside door propped open. If the child needs assistance, assure that the bathroom door remains open and encourage the child to be as independent as possible. Use gloves when assisting a child with clean up.

6. Car Pooling and Traveling

When a group of children and adults are traveling (camp & Thurs. activities, for example), standard practice shall be that, for safety and security, two adults, or one adult and one teenage worker, travel in each vehicle whenever possible. Under special circumstances, with the prior approval of parents, multiple children may be transported together with one adult.

CFM workers should avoid providing individual rides to children, if at all possible. However, if circumstances arise that make giving rides necessary use common sense. Clear communication between the adult and the parents is essential; that is telling parents who will be in the car, where you are going, how long you expect it to take, and when you will bring the child home.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1. West Side Preschool

Volunteer parent helpers often are not members of West Side Church and are not trained or screened; however, it is allowable for them to work under the supervision of a teacher who has been trained and screened through West Side Church.

2. Morning Glory childcare

The two screened and trained worker rule also applies to this situation. Helpers from Morning Glory who have not been trained and screened through West Side may work under the supervision of two trained and screened workers but should not be alone with any child nor should they take a child to the bathroom.

3. ESL children's classes and childcare

Volunteer and hired childcare workers must have child security screening and training through West Side. A screened and trained teenage worker may be the second worker.

4. Alpha childcare

Volunteer and hired childcare workers must have child security screening and training through West Side. A screened and trained teenage worker may be the second worker.

5. Special Needs Child/Vulnerable Adult

The unique needs of a special needs child or vulnerable adult may create a situation where one-on-one care is allowed in order to provide adequate supervision and/or meet the child's unique needs. Because of the special nature of these needs, all care decisions for special needs children will be made in cooperation with parent(s) and/or legal guardian. Decisions regarding use of a single caregiver in these situations may be made in agreement with parents. In these circumstances, all guidelines for one-on-one care provided for in the Child Security policy are followed.

6. Facility Use for Non-Church Sponsored Activities

When activities involving children in non-church sponsored events occur at a West Side Church facility, a release form (Attachment A) stating that the activities are arranged between the individuals and acknowledging the activity is not covered under the church's child security policy will need to be signed by the individual using the facility.

REPORTING ABUSE

If something seems unusual or is cause for concern, or if any abuse is reported to you, **notify the Head of Staff (Senior Pastor or his/her alternate) without delay.**

Remember: unfounded accusations or misinterpreted affections can be almost as damaging as real abuse. Follow the guidelines so you will give no grounds for misinterpretation or false accusation. We want to protect the child, you and your family, the ministry and future ministries of West Side Church.

REVISION OF THESE GUIDELINES

- These guidelines will be reviewed annually by the CFM Committee to determine if any changes are needed.
- Any revision to these guidelines will be prepared by the CFM Committee with input from the CFM ministry staff.
- Any revision to these guidelines will be reviewed and approved by the Oversight Committee and a report will be made to Session