



PALMETTO
BAPTIST CHURCH

Child Safety Policies & Procedures

Revised September 21, 2023

Volunteers: Directors, Teachers, and Helpers

Eligibility

- Directors must be BOTH 1) members in good standing 2) with pastoral approval to be eligible for the role.
- Teachers and helpers must be 1) members in good standing OR 2) post-primary school children of members.
 - Men are not allowed to change or help change children's diapers unless it is their own child.
 - Men are only eligible to help with ages 3 and older, and only when a woman volunteer is also present.
 - Any exception must be approved by the pastoral team. Other factors of eligibility, such as sufficient ability to properly care for the relevant age groups, will be considered as well.

Application and Screening

Before a volunteer can begin helping in children's ministry, they must meet the following:

- 1) be a member in good standing.
- 2) read and agree with this policies and procedures document.
- 3) complete a background check that is reviewed by one of the directors or pastors.¹
- 4) complete the required training.

Ongoing Accountability

Both the training video and background check requirements must be completed and reviewed every 5 years in order to maintain eligibility as a volunteer. Factors such as inactivity for more than 6 months may warrant a pastor or director to require a more recent background check. The student/children's pastor and ministry leaders will provide oversight for all volunteers, both in their ministry activities and in maintaining eligibility as a teacher and helper.

If a volunteer violates this policy, the ministry leader should first talk to the individual violating the policy—unless the violation of policy includes abuse or suspicion of abuse. Ministry leaders will investigate and document all reported policy violations that do not involve abuse or suspected abuse, ensure future compliance, and if necessary, remove the team member from his or her position. If the violation includes suspected abuse, the volunteer must immediately report the situation to the ministry leader and a pastor and fill out an Accident/Incident Report Form.

Training

The children's pastor and/or directors will provide instructions to volunteers concerning their responsibilities.

Identification

All volunteers will be identified by a printed sticker or lanyard with their name and ministry. The check-in desk worker will check that the volunteer is scheduled to serve that shift before printing a sticker. All approved PBC personnel who serve in the children's area will have similar identification. Volunteers are not allowed to serve without their volunteer ID. Only individuals possessing an official ID sticker and the pastors are allowed beyond the children's check-in desk without a supervisor's approval.

¹ This is only for those who are over 18 years old. Any irregularities that are discovered upon review of the background check will be brought to the attention of the pastors to be considered before the volunteer approval process is complete.

Accountability and Reporting of Abuse

We recognize the definition of abuse as outlined by the South Carolina Code of Laws Child Abuse/Neglect ([SC Code Ann. §63-7-20\(4\)](#)). We do not permit or tolerate child abuse or neglect, sexual abuse, sexual molestation, or any other form of inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature toward any child, student, or program participant under the age of 18 years old and under the care or responsibility of the church or any of its ministries, regardless of whether such conduct occurs on church property, on sponsored outings, or in any other location or under any other circumstances.

Accusations of Abuse against Team Members

If an accusation of abuse is made against a team member (ministry leaders, volunteers, or employees), the team member will be immediately removed from his or her position until an investigation is complete according to the steps outlined at the bottom of this page in cooperation with the local authorities.

If the investigation substantiates the allegation or it is determined by the church leadership that the conduct of a volunteer team member was contrary to the best interests of the church's ministry, our policy provides for disciplinary penalties and church discipline procedures, including, but not limited to, permanent termination of the individual's relationship with Palmetto Baptist Church. Ministry leaders will maintain their responsibility to report to law enforcement, and the accused team member may be subject to criminal prosecution.

If the team member is convicted or found liable of an allegation of a crime of abuse or molestation or is found liable in a civil allegation of abuse or molestation of a minor, or if the Department of Social Services substantiates a finding of abuse or molestation of a minor, he or she will be permanently removed from ministry with minors at PBC. If applicable, termination of employment will also result.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

All PBC children's ministry team members over 18 years old are mandatory reporters according to [South Carolina Code Ann. § 63-7-310](#). In order to enforce a "zero-tolerance" policy, team members must follow mandatory procedures when they suspect or witness abuse. Volunteers should immediately notify their ministry leader if they observe personally or see evidence of activity that constitutes abuse whether between parent and child, teacher and child, or child and child. This includes abuse that may have been committed in the past if the child, student, or program participant is still under 18 years of age. If over 18, the individual abused is responsible to seek legal action.

When suspected abuse is reported, the following steps will be taken:

1. The witness will submit a report to the Anderson County Department of Social Services or law enforcement agency according to the mandatory reporting guidelines as quickly as possible and exceeding no more than 24 hours after reasonable suspicion.
2. The witness will fully cooperate with any law enforcement or government agency investigating the allegation.
3. The witness will fill out an Incident Report Form and discuss the incident privately with a pastor or pastors.
4. The church will conduct its own internal investigation, both referring all results to the law enforcement agencies and without obstructing the government investigation in any way.
5. The church will make every effort to protect the privacy of both the reporter and the suspected victim.
6. The church will seek legal counsel if necessary and designate a spokesperson to be the sole provider of information to the media.

No one will be subject to, and PBC prohibits, any form of discipline or retaliation for reporting incidents of sexual abuse or molestation, pursuing any such claim, or cooperating in the investigation of such reports.

Illness and Injury

Volunteers

A person who is ill (with a fever or having a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any children's and teens' ministries activity. A suitable substitute, who has been approved as a volunteer through the above screening process, must be used to take the place of an ill volunteer.

Children

Children should be free from the following symptoms for at least 48 hours before entering a classroom:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Eye infections (e.g., pink eye, etc.)
- Visible rash
- Open sore(s)
- Excessive coughing
- Lice
- Flu-like nasal drainage (non-clear mucus)

An ill child should be returned to his parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. Until the parent arrives, the child should be cared for as much as possible apart from other children.

Volunteers should take reasonable steps to prevent contact between any person and the bodily fluids of any other person, such as:

- Washing hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids.
- Wearing disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treating all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- Removing toys that children have mouthed from the general play area for washing.
- Disinfecting the room with disinfectant spray at the end of a session.

Any ministry leader or supervisor who becomes aware of any injury to a teacher, assistant, or child will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given.

- A child who has received an obviously minor injury (e.g., paper cut, scrapes) should be given basic first aid as needed. The child's parent or guardian should be notified personally by the ministry volunteer of the minor injury when the child is picked up.
- Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond basic first aid should be given immediate attention. The parent or guardian of the injured child should be immediately notified via text message, along with the ministry leader or pastor. An ambulance should be called immediately if needed.
- No volunteer will administer medicine of any kind (aspirin, tums, etc.). A parent will be called to do so.
- PBC has healthcare teams in place at each service to assist in any medical emergency. An usher or safety team member will be able to contact a member of the healthcare team.

Accident/Incident Reporting

A volunteer must complete an Accident/Incident Report Form if one of the following events occurs:

- A child has an accident that requires more than basic first aid.
- A child physically injures another person (via pushing, hitting, biting, etc.).
- A child or adult receives a verbal threat from another child or adult.
- Any form of sexual abuse has been committed.

An Accident/Incident Report Form should be completed before the volunteer leaves the premises in order that the injury and surrounding events are documented promptly and accurately. Incident reports are located at the check-in desk and are to be submitted to a pastor. At their discretion, the pastors will notify the church's legal counsel and insurance carrier of the event.

Food or Other Allergies

PBC wants to serve and accommodate our families who have children with food allergies to the best of our ability. Volunteers should be aware of the children in their care with allergies and accommodate accordingly. At check-in, parents are responsible to inform the supervisors or volunteers of any food or other allergies or special dietary needs their child may have.

- Parents should ask about what, if any, snacks are being served in their child's class. Parents are welcome to and should provide a snack for their child if they have any concerns about what is being served.
- Parents should advise the workers if a child has an epi-pen or inhaler (or similar item) in the child's possession (backpack, church bag, etc.) and provide any instructions for their use in an emergency situation.
- If an allergic reaction occurs, the parent will be immediately notified, and the PBC healthcare team summoned.

Discipline/Correction

Discipline of children is recognized as the parents' responsibility, and it is not the intention of PBC or its leaders to assume that responsibility. Volunteers are prohibited from administering physical discipline of any form, isolation, and abusive verbal correction.

Behavior that is disruptive to the group will be handled in the following manner:

- The volunteer will speak privately to the child with positive instruction and lovingly correct the behavior.
- If the disruptive behavior continues, the volunteer will give the child a final warning that continuing in such behavior will result in the immediate contacting of his or her parents. The volunteer may also place the child in "timeout" from the group (in the same room) for 1-2 minutes.
- If the disruptive behavior continues, the volunteer or ministry leader will contact the parents to request assistance or remove the child from the class. In some cases, the parents should be contacted immediately.
- If the child continues to disrupt the class until the parent arrives, he or she may be escorted by two volunteers to the loft or foyer area to wait for the parents. In the event a behavior issue escalates to this point, the volunteer is required to fill out an Accident/Incident Report Form.

Any children participating in dangerous or unusual behavior must be corrected and reported to a ministry leader. Children are not allowed on the elevator at any time without a parent or adult supervisor. The ministry leader will report the activity to a pastor and/or fill out an Accident/Incident Report Form at their discretion.

It is encouraged for volunteers to keep parents informed and involved, if possible, in their child's activities and behavior (both positive and negative). The volunteer should never assume the role or responsibility of a parent.

Evacuation

Evacuation plans are posted in each room, and will be updated as necessary. Ministry leaders and volunteers should familiarize themselves with the posted plan so that they may act accordingly in the event of an evacuation. Teachers are responsible for keeping attendance on the provided class list in case of an emergency evacuation. That attendance list should be brought with the teacher so that they can account for the number of children present once the class is in a safe location. Evacuation drills are periodically conducted by the safety team to familiarize volunteers and kids with the evacuation process.

Check-in/Check-out Policy

Check-in

- Parents are to check in their child(ren) online, via the church app, or at the check-in desk upon arrival. This applies to all children from birth through K4.
- Parents are expected to take their own children to the restroom prior to dropping them off.
- Parents are not to drop off their children more than 15 minutes prior to a service time unless previous arrangements have been made with a ministry leader.
- All children will receive a label with their name and any additional parent-specified instructions.
- Parents are to provide a mobile number in the event that they need to be quickly notified via text. Parents unable to receive text messages will be notified personally.
- Parents are to note all allergies or special instructions either to the check-in helper or on the child's church database profile.
- Parents will receive a guardian receipt that corresponds to the child's label.
- Assigned volunteers will escort children from the check-in desk to their assigned room. Parents of infants (birth through 9 months), nursing mothers, and parents who are first-time guests may be escorted beyond the check-in desk at the discretion of the ministry leader or supervisor.
- Parents will be able to view the classrooms on a monitor near the check-in desk.

Check-out

- Volunteers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, siblings 13 years or older, or other persons authorized to pick up the children. Anyone picking up a child must be in possession of the correct guardian receipt received at check-in. Parents of infants (birth through 9 months) may be escorted beyond the check-in desk at the discretion of the ministry leader to pick up their child.
- Preschool through 5th grade children will wait in their classrooms until a parent has arrived to pick them up. One volunteer will stay in the classroom with the children while the other volunteer escorts children to the check-in desk.
- Parents are to pick up their children immediately after the dismissal of the service or class. Parents who fail to pick up their children within a reasonable time will be notified via call or text, and the volunteers will take responsible action to contact the parent to pick up the child. Children will not be left alone in order for volunteers to locate parents.

Supervision

To guard against the potential for abuse and injury, we make every reasonable effort to maintain an appropriate ratio of adult supervisors to minors. If a particular nursery or class is understaffed, volunteers should notify the ministry leader and solicit assistance from other approved volunteers.

In general, nurseries should maintain at least a 1:4 ratio. All nurseries will have at least two workers at all times. Older classes may function with a larger ratio, such as a 1:10 ratio, at the director's discretion. Classes should have two workers, but may function with one female teacher at the ministry leader's discretion. At no time should a volunteer be alone with a child in any location (including the elevator).

Physical Contact with Children

A nursery volunteer who deals with diapers should adhere to the following procedures:

- Only females 18 years old and older may change diapers. Exceptions to this must be approved by the ministry leader.
- Parents will be allowed to change their own child's diaper in the restroom or in the mother's room.
- Specific diaper changing guidelines are provided in the Nursery Handbook.

Children's class volunteers should adhere to the following procedures for restroom breaks:

- Volunteers must remain in visible, monitored areas when escorting children to the bathroom.
- The volunteer should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom until the children come out. At no time should a volunteer be in the restroom alone with a child with the door shut. The volunteer may leave the door open in order to instruct the child if necessary.
- If a child has wet or soiled his clothes, the volunteer should verbally instruct the child on how to clean himself without direct assistance and text the child's parents to assist. The volunteer should not be in direct physical contact with the child.
- Be aware that a child's parents may request to be called or texted to help their child use the restroom. The child may wait at the check-in desk with at least two volunteers until his or her parent arrives.

Miscellaneous

- All classrooms are monitored with video cameras. Even so, if a team member is ever alone in a room with children, the door must remain open.
- Volunteers should not bring illegal substances, weapons, knives, pepper spray, mace, or any other kind of weapon or self-defense item into the nurseries or children's classrooms.
- Volunteers must avoid situations that create the perception or appearance of inappropriate behavior.
- Regarding Community Groups, Kids4Truth, or other activities/meetings that would provide childcare: It is our desire to follow the policy as closely as possible, to best protect the children and the church. We understand each group has a unique makeup and may not be able to follow the policy to the "letter of the law." General guidelines include having at least 2 adults or teens watching the children, church membership of workers is preferred, and if possible have the workers complete background checks and child sexual abuse training through the safety director.

Revision of Children/Teens Procedure and Protection Policy

This Children's Safety Procedures and Policies will be reviewed regularly and can be modified by the approval of the pastors. Any such modification should be promptly conveyed to all leaders and volunteers affected by the modification.

Summary and Approval

This policy has been approved by the pastors and applies to all team members serving with children.