

**VillageChurch Volunteer**

**Policy and Procedures Manual**

August 2018

**Village Church Children’s Ministry Policy and Procedures Manual**

**Table of Contents**

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION 1

VISION AND VALUES 1

SECTION 2: EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER SCREENING 2

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE 2

SELECTION OF EMPLOYEES/VOLUNTEERS 3

RESULTS OF SCREEING 4

SECTION 3: CHILD ABUSE AND PROTECTION 6

VOLUNTEER/CHILD PROTECTION 6

REPORTING POTENTIAL ABUSE .…………………………………………………………………………………….8

SECTION 4: VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES 9

VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCE 9

INTOXICANTS/STIMULANTS 9

COMPUTER CHECK-IN 9

PROMOTION 10

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT 10

DISCIPLINE 10

VOLUNTEER TRAINING 11

SECTION 5: MINISTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION 12

NURSERY AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN 12

ELEMENTARY 13

SHAKEN AND SURGE…………………………………………………………………………………………………….14

SECTION 6: SAFETY & SECURITY 16

SECURITY 16

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES 16

 SECTION 7: CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY……………………………………………………...18

THE POLICY…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………18

RESPONSE, INVESTIGATION, AND DISCIPLINARY POLICY……………………………………………..19

# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

## VISION AND VALUES

#### Mission

To engage culture with the hope that people will be transformed by the power of Jesus.

#### Vision

Love God. Love people.

#### Values

We believe that God’s word is the foundational truth. Our mission is to lead our youth to use God’s word as a guide, authority, and conscience daily.

We believe that life-change happens best in the context of relationships. We value our volunteers. Your gifts and passion will serve as a model to our youth, impacting God’s Kingdom for generations to come.

We believe that church is FUN and that it should be an exciting place to learn the truths of the Bible.

We believe in inspiring kids to greatness. VillageChurch is committed to pursuing excellence in our programs, taking advantage of each and every opportunity to be innovative, and continued examination of everything we do to ensure our programs are effective.

We believe that spiritual growth happens best in an atmosphere that ensures that our children and youth feel safe and secure.

# SECTION 2: EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER SCREENING

**BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

**Purpose:** VillageChurch seeks to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the preschoolers, children, and students of this church.  Physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse will not be tolerated.

**Goal:**To prevent the commission of physical, verbal or mental abuse, child sexual abuse or child molestation against any VillageChurch youth and to protect VillageChurch employees and volunteers from false accusations.

**Terms referenced in this policy are defined as follows:**

**Preschooler** – a child from birth to five years old or completion of 5 year-old preschool.

**Children** – grades K – 5

**Students** – grades 6– 12 or until the child turns 18 years old if the child is under 18 years old at the completion of the 12th grade.

**Employment Application** – An Employment Application (or the equivalent for ministerial staff) is required for all applicants for employment and is obtained through the VillageChurch Business Office.

**Screening Form** – A Screening Form is required for all employees and volunteers.    New employees and volunteers must complete this form before beginning service.  Failure or refusal to sign the Screening Form for persons seeking to work with preschoolers, children, or students will prevent the individual from serving in these areas.  Screening Forms are available in the VillageChurch Business Office.

**Policy Review**– All employees and volunteers must review VillageChurch’s Policies and Procedures Manual. A Minister and/or another person designated for this purpose shall review the Policy with volunteers.  The Pastor, or his designate, will review the policy with all employees. Each person shall sign a statement indicating that he/she: (1) has reviewed and understands the policies; (2) agrees to abide by the policies; and (3) will voluntarily remove his/herself from further participation with Preschool, Children and Student activities sponsored by VillageChurch if an accusation arises until such time as the accusation is resolved and he/she is permitted to return to Preschool, Children and Student activities by VillageChurch.

**Reference Check** – A reference check will be conducted on all new employees.  VillageChurch reserves the right to check references on any volunteer, as it deems appropriate.

**Criminal Records Check/SLED/DSS Check** –VillageChurch will obtain a SLED and DSS records check for all employees, and regular volunteers.  VillageChurch reserves the right to obtain a SLED and/or DSS records check on special activity volunteers, as it deems appropriate. SLED and DSS checks will be obtained for each staff member (paid or volunteer) as set forth in this policy.  The criminal background check should also include a national criminal background search if not encompassed by the SLED Report.  Similarly, a statewide sexual offender search should be obtained from each state in which the applicant, employee or volunteer has resided in the past ten years.  VillageChurch may also request that an applicant/employee/volunteer be fingerprinted for purposes of conducting a records check.  Failure to provide the required consent, of fingerprints if requested, will result in an applicant not being hired, an employee being removed from his/her position and/or terminated, and a volunteer not being permitted to work with any Preschool, Children and Student in any activity sponsored by VillageChurch.

**SELECTION OF EMPLOYEES/VOLUNTEERS**

Employees and volunteers will be subject to the screening procedures listed below by VillageChurch’s Business Office.  A confidential file will be maintained for each person and secured in the Business Office.  These files will only be available to the Pastor or his designee as deemed appropriate.

* **Employees and Volunteers who fail to complete this process will not be eligible for service with preschool, children or students.**
* Employees and Volunteers that are already serving shall be required to immediately complete a Screening Form, review the Manual and sign the acknowledgement upon the approval of this Manual.

**New Employees**

The following is required of new employeesincluding ministerial staff:

* Employment Application (or equivalent information for ministerial staff);
* Interview with appropriate supervisor;
* Policy Review;
* Reference Check;
* SLED/DSS Check/nationwide criminal background/sexual offender search (if person has resided outside of South Carolina in the prior ten years. Village Church will ensure compliance with the requirements of the Fair Credit Report Act with respect to inquiries regarding applicants and employees;
* Screening Form.

**Regular Volunteers**

Regular volunteers are those volunteers that have been a member of VillageChurch for at least 90 days and work with our preschoolers, children, or students on an ongoing basis.  Regular volunteers include, but are not limited to**,**Team Kid Teachers, Shaken Teachers, Surge Teachers, VGroup Leaders, and Camp and Retreat Chaperones.

The following is required of all regular volunteers:

* Meeting with appropriate age-level Minister;
* Policy Review;
* SLED/DSS Check/nationwide criminal background/sexual offender search (if person has resided outside of South Carolina in the prior ten years;
* Screening Form;
* References will be checked as deemed appropriate by the age-level Minister.

**Special Activity Volunteers**

Special activity volunteers are volunteers that work with our preschoolers, children, and students for a designated event or time. Church membership is preferred, but not required, when deemed appropriate by the age-level Minister.  Special activity volunteers include,but are not limited to, Vacation Bible School volunteers, parent volunteers for the Student Ministry, and event volunteers.

The following is required of all special activity volunteers:

* Meeting with appropriate age-level Minister;
* A reference and SLED/DSS check as deemed appropriate by the age-level Minister.

**Youth Volunteer**

* Be at least 13 (17 to work with nursery) and a member of VillageChurch;
* Meeting with appropriate age-level Minister;
* Policy Review;
* A reference and SLED/DSS check as deemed appropriate by the age-level Minister.

**RESULTS OF SCREENING**

The results of the screening shall be handled as follows:

1.  If the screening checks do not reveal any unfavorable information, the individual may be hired if an applicant for employment or permitted to serve as a volunteer if seeking volunteer status.

2.  Any unfavorable response must be forwarded to the appropriate age-level Minister or Pastor, depending on whether the person is seeking to be a volunteer or employment.

3.  Unfavorable information includes, but is not limited to:

a.  Any felony conviction in the preceding 10 years.  Such conviction will automatically preclude the individual from being hired or used as a volunteer.

b.    Any felony conviction involving the use of drugs will automatically preclude the individual from being hired or used as a volunteer.

c.   Any violent misdemeanor within the preceding 10 years.  Such conviction will automatically preclude the individual from being hired or used as a volunteer.

d.  Any non-violent misdemeanor conviction, other than a minor traffic violation, could be disqualifying.  Applicant will be required to provide a letter of explanation regarding the events leading to the conviction.

e.  Any misdemeanor conviction involving the use of drugs or alcohol within the preceding 3 years will automatically preclude the individual from being hired or used as a volunteer.

f.  Any convictions for child abuse or sex abuse will automatically preclude the individual from being hired or used as a volunteer.

4. The appropriate age-level Minister will inform applicants for volunteer positions that his or her background check was unsatisfactory.  The Pastor will responsible for this task with response with respect to applicants for employment; however, nothing herein shall be construed as to require the Pastor to provide a reason, including the fact he or she had an unsatisfactory background check, to any applicant as to why he or she was not hired.  The appropriate age-level Minister (or Pastor with respect to applicants for employment) should not discuss the unfavorable information but may in his or her discretion refer the applicant to the appropriate reporting entity.  The Business Office should retain the unfavorable information in accordance with the SBC’s normal record retention policy.

5. VillageChurch may, its discretion, place clearly defined restrictions on any person seeking to volunteer with Preschool, Children and Student in any activity sponsored by VillageChurch.

**Right to Review and/or Require Updated Information**

VillageChurch reserves the right to review background screening material collected in accordance with this policy at any time for any reason. Background checks or new reference checks may be required at any time for any reason.

# SECTION 3: CHILD ABUSE AND PROTECTION

## VOLUNTEER/CHILD PROTECTION

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

**One Month Orientation**

New volunteers must work alongside a Regular Volunteer for a period of one months before he or she can considered as the lead volunteer for any activity.

**Two Adult Rule**

Two unrelated adults shall be present and supervising minors at all times. This requirement applies to every church function and applies in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving minors. No minors or group of minors will be left in the care of only one adult. Same-sex adult supervision will be provided for all overnight trips. In situations like a retreat, the required adult supervision may be provided with adult supervisors from other churches. If a volunteer needs to leave a group of children, another volunteer or staff member must be notified so that the two volunteer policy can be upheld.

**Rule of Three**

In cases of unforeseen circumstances or exigencies when the Two Adult Rule cannot be implemented, at least three individuals, one of whom must be an adult, shall be present at every church function and in each classroom, vehicle or other enclosed area during all activities involving minors.

The Two Adult Rule is normally required for the supervision of minors and the Rule of Three should be used only in exceptional circumstances when it is not feasible to implement the Two Adult Rule. If the Rule of Three is implemented for specific circumstances and that those circumstances involve a classroom or enclosed area equipped with a door (not including an automobile), the door should remain open and adult supervisors in adjacent rooms should be alerted so that those supervising adults are able to monitor the situation in the adjacent classroom. In implementing the Rule of Three in a particular circumstance, the ages and capacities of the two non-adult members involved in the Rule of Three must be considered.

If due to exceptional circumstances the Rule of Three is employed for an activity involving the entire church building or many rooms in various parts of the church, an adult premises monitor or monitors shall be designated to patrol the hallways and common areas within the church where the activities are taking place. The premises monitor(s) shall rove the entire church building and observe the activities in the classrooms and other spaces to ensure the safety of minor participants during the activities.

**Limited Exception to Two Adult Rule and to Rule of Three**

Neither the Two Adult Rule nor the Rule of Three is required for one-on-one spiritual counseling with a minor or in emergencies involving the safety of a minor or others involved in the activity with a minor. Should one-on-one spiritual counseling be conducted by anyone other than an ordained member of the VillageChurch staff, the Pastor must be notified in advance and the Pastor must approve the counseling before the counseling may start. Normally, one-on-one spiritual counseling will last no longer than thirty minutes per session and will normally be limited to four sessions.

**Staffing Ratios**

Preschool guidelines will be followed for the ratio of adults to preschoolers for all VillageChurch activities. When the number of children/students participating in a VillageChurch activity exceeds ten, an additional adult is suggested for every seven children/students. In situations involving a large group (30 or more children/students), the ratio of adults to children/students should be no greater than 1:10 whenever reasonably possible.

**Overnight and Off Campus Activities**

Special attention will be given to the supervision during overnight and off-campus activities.

* Two paid or volunteer staff should be present at all times during any activity. Additional volunteers may be required based on the number of person participating in the activity.
* All participants will have parental consent and a medical release form in writing.

**Restroom Policy**

Volunteers should provide assistance to a child using the restroom only if the child is three years or younger or has special needs requiring extra assistance. Only female volunteers should provide this assistance (unless the child’s father is a volunteer, then the father may help only his child).

Restrooms located between classrooms—For Nursery & Preschool children: A female volunteer may provide assistance for a child three years or younger in one of these restrooms, as long as the restroom door remains cracked open and one or more volunteers are present in the room adjoining the restroom.

Multi-stall restrooms—For Elementary Children: A volunteers is required to take elementary children, kindergarten through 3rd grade, to these restrooms. The volunteer should check the restroom before the child enters and then hold the door of the restroom open while the child(ren) goes(go) into a stall. The volunteer should remain outside the restroom, waiting for the child to finish. If an elementary child requires assistance in the restroom, an adult of the same sex as the child requiring assistance will assist the child in the restroom with the restroom door propped open so that a second adult can visually monitor the assisting adult. Elementary children in the 4th and 5th grade may use the restroom on their own, without the attendance of a volunteer.

**Physical Contact**

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

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

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

The following are actions a volunteer should **NEVER** take:

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

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

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

**Visibility and Secur****ity**

It is important that all interactions between children and volunteers happen in a location where other adults can observe what is going on for safety and accountability purposes. At no time should a child and volunteer disappear behind a closed door with no visibility to outsiders. **Always take whatever steps are necessary to avoid even the appearance of impropriety**.

**Verbal Interactions**

Verbal interactions between volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. VillageChurch volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing and/or engaging in any discussion which could be construed as inappropriate.

**REPORTING POTENTIAL ABUSE**

Employees or volunteers who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting preschoolers, children, or students should report it as soon as possible to any Minister or the Pastor. If a Minister or the Pastor is not available, the incident may be reported to the Children’s Ministry Coordinator. The Minister (or Children’s Ministry Coordinator) will notify the Pastor. Situations covered by the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy will thereafter be handled in accordance with procedures described below in Section 7.

# SECTION 4: VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

## VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCE

**Arrival**

Volunteers are expected to arrive 15 minutes prior to the scheduled event and/or meeting unless otherwise instructed by leadership.

**Departure**

Volunteers must remain at the children’s ministry event until the last child has been picked up by a parent or until relieved by another volunteer or VillageChurch children’s ministry employee.

**Absences**

Volunteers are responsible for their assigned shifts. If a volunteer is scheduled to work a shift and a conflict arises the volunteer should contact the Children’s Ministry Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, or age appropriate Minister to find a replacement.

## INTOXICANTS/STIMULANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes and illegal drugs while working with, or supervising children at VillageChurch. Staff members and volunteers are also prohibited from being under the influence of legally prescribed drugs that have the potential of impairing judgment while working with or supervising VillageChurch youth.

## COMPUTER CHECK-IN

All VillageChurch children and youth must be checked-in by volunteers at the Children’s Welcome Desk.

Children (infants through 5th grade) must be checked-in at one of the computer kiosks located within the VillageChurch facility and wear a printed or assigned nametag to be checked into Sunday classes.

Every family unit will receive a three-digit security tag that corresponds to the family’s children’s name-tag. A security tag is required to checkout children, newborn through pre-kindergarten, and all first-time guests. If the security tag is misplaced, the parent will need to show his or her driver’s license.

Elementary children, kindergarten through 5th grade, must be picked up from the child’s classroom space by a family member; the child must be checked out by his or her teacher. All classroom teachers have the right to ask for a parent’s driver’s license.

Guests at VillageChurch will be checked-in by volunteers at the Children’s Welcome Desk. These children and parents will follow the same procedure regarding nametags and security tags.

## PROMOTION

Children are promoted to the next class level once each year at the beginning of the school year. Children remain in their class level until the next promotion date unless given specific permission by the Children’s Ministry Coordinator.

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

If a child is completely inconsolable (after at least ten minutes of care), ill or injured, has a severe disciplinary problem, or is a danger to himself/herself or other children, a parent will be called from the Worship Center to pick the child up.

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved, subject to the restrictions set forth herein. Parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children’s programs at VillageChurch will be required to complete the VillageChurch volunteer application and screening process.

## DISCIPLINE

Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Discipline should be promptly imposed, specific to the inappropriate behavior, and consistent.

**Be Prepared**

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

**Prayer**

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

**Discipline Steps**

If discipline cannot be avoided, children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. When employing discipline, 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. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with a clear explanation of your expectations. (“Jamie, you didn’t stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.”) In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
	4. 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).
	5. 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.”).
	6. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

If the behavior continues, volunteers should contact a staff member for assistance. The Children’s Ministry Coordinator will determine what further action should be taken (contacting the parent, discussion with parent, etc.)

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING

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

Each Volunteer shall attend annual training on the policies expressed in this manual. Each volunteer shall attend one informational meeting regarding his/her area of ministry every year. Volunteer meetings will generally be held in August of each year.

Volunteers are required to attend any ongoing training sessions as designated by the Coordinator of his/her area of ministry. From time to time, VillageChurch will provide periodic training sessions to address specific needs and/or topics of interest for volunteers.

# SECTION 5: MINISTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION

**NURSERY AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

**Check-in Policy**

Children must have either a computer-generated or handwritten security nametag to be admitted into a classroom. Volunteers must write down the child’s name, 3 digit code and any special instructions on the classroom roster. First time guests must also write their cell phone number on the roster, next to their child’s name.

**Age Requirement**

Two adult leaders are required to be in each of the nursery and pre-kindergarten classrooms. Youth volunteers are allowed to participate as helpers in these classrooms provided that the student meets the following minimum age requirements:

* Nursery: 17 years of age.
* 2 & 3 year old, and 4 & 5 year old classrooms: 8th grade and at least 13 years of age.

The Children’s Ministry Coordinator reserves the right to grant permission on a case-by-case basis, for children under the age of 13 years and to make exceptions to the minimum age requirements on a case by case basis.

**Diaper Procedure**

Volunteers must adhere to the following procedure when changing diapers:

* + Children must be placed securely on the changing table or on the floor, using a clean disposable changing pad, before changing a diaper.
	+ Do not move away from or turn your back on the changing table while changing a diaper.
	+ Wear disposable gloves while changing a diaper and use new gloves with each change.
	+ Dispose of diaper, gloves, and changing pad in provided trash can.
	+ Disinfect your hands after changing diapers.
	+ Disinfect the diaper changing area at the end of each service.
	+ Only female volunteers are to change diapers. Male volunteers should care for other children in the room while a female volunteer changes diapers.

**Bathroom Policy**

Many children may be potty training. Parents should encourage their children to go to the restroom prior to class. If a child needs to go to the restroom during class, a female volunteer may assist the child as needed using the restroom attached to the classroom. The restroom door should remain open any time a volunteer and child occupy the restroom and the second volunteer should be in the position to observe the first volunteer.

**Room Clean-Up Policy**

Volunteers are expected to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used in the nursery area after each service.

**Check-Out Policy**

Children may only be released to a parent with a security tag that corresponds to the nametag for a specific child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security tag, the volunteer on duty must ask to see the adult’s driver license. If the adult’s relationship to the child can be validated, then the volunteer may release the child. If the adult’s relationship to the child cannot be validated, then the Children’s Coordinator must be notified to determine whether to release a child.

**Child to Volunteer Ratio & Room Capacity Limits**

VillageChurch will adhere to its established limits for child-to-volunteer ratios and room capacities in order to protect the safety of the children and ensure the best experience for both children and volunteers. Classrooms will be closed and additional families directed elsewhere when these limits are reached. If the limit is reached and a child’s age group is closed for a given week, parents will need to keep their child with them if they attend the service.

## ELEMENTARY

**Check-In Policy**

Children must have either a computer-generated or handwritten security nametag to be admitted into a classroom. Volunteers must write down the child’s name and any special instructions on the classroom roster.

**Age Requirement**

Two adult leaders are required to be in each classroom. Additionally, youth volunteers are allowed to assist as help so long as they are in the 8th grade and 13 years of age.

**Check-Out Policy**

Elementary children will be released from their classroom, by their classroom teacher, directly to the child’s parent or guardian. Parents or guardians of elementary children visiting for the first time will need to show the security given at check-in. The classroom teacher has the right to ask for a driver’s license to verify any adult picking up a child. If the adult’s relationship to the child cannot be verified, the Children’s Ministry Coordinator must be notified to determine whether to release a child.

**Bathroom Policy**

A volunteer should supervise restroom visits from the exterior hallway for kindergarten through 3rd graders. Fourth and 5th graders may use the restroom on their own after receiving permission from their teacher.

**Child to Volunteer Ratio & Room Capacity Limits**

Same standards that apply to Nursery/Pre-Kindergarten apply to elementary age youth classrooms.

**Student Ministries Policies**

In ministry to students, we adhere to a “two adult” policy. If at all reasonably possible, there will be two adults present in all ministry to students. An adult leader should never be alone with a student (of any gender). Adult leaders and staff should work hard to protect each other from being put in one-on-one situations with students. In the event the two adult policy cannot be followed, the rule of three discussed herein must be followed.

**Classroom / VGroup Meeting Place**

* If one of the adult leaders has to leave the room for any reason, the door to the classroom should be left open until the second leader returns.
* In the rare event an adult leader is absent from VGroup, Student Ministry staff should

be notified as soon as possible so that a “substitute” can be lined up to assist with the

group.

**Transportation**

* Adult leaders should avoid transporting students by themselves. If this is not possible, two adult leaders should follow each other at a visible distance.
* Permission is required from a parent or guardian before a student can be transported. (Written permission preferred, verbal permission acceptable when written permission cannot be given.)

## If a student babysitter requires transportation, a same gender adult may provide transportation directly home, with prior parent/guardian consent.

**Meeting with Students (outside of a Shaken, Surge, or VGroup Ministry Event)**

Meeting with students outside of ministry programs are encouraged as long as meetings are not held in a private setting. The following guidelines should be observed.

* When possible, communicate with parent that meeting is taking place and details of meeting.
* Have student meet you in public setting. (Starbucks, mall, etc.)
* Have another adult or student participate in the meeting if reasonably possible.

When communicating with a student through a digital device or social media we strongly recommend that a second adult be included in a response. Any communication should be consistent with the policies set forth herein.

## SHAKEN and SURGE

**Check-In Policy**

Youth must check in and receive a computer-generated or handwritten security nametag to be admitted.

**Staffing**

Volunteers will be assigned to designated tasks (ie., check in, hospitality, etc). High school students will be permitted to assist with SHAKEN so long as they are in the 9th grade and 15 years of age.

**Check-Out Policy**

SHAKEN

Participants will be dismissed to parents on a car by car basis. One or more Volunteers will be stationed outside to confirm the youth that need to be picked up. This information will be communicated to a second volunteer stationed inside the building who will then dismiss the Youth. Any Volunteer assisting with dismissal has the right to ask for a driver’s license to verify any adult picking up a child. If the adult’s relationship to the participant(s) cannot be verified, the Age Appropriate Pastor must be notified to determine whether to release the participant(s).

SURGE

Participants who were dropped off will be dismissed to parents on a car by car basis. One or more Volunteers will be stationed outside to confirm the youth that need to be picked up. This information will be communicated to a second volunteer stationed inside the building who will then dismiss the Youth. Any Volunteer assisting with dismissal has the right to ask for a driver’s license to verify any adult picking up a child. If the adult’s relationship to the participant(s) cannot be verified, the Age Appropriate Pastor must be notified to determine whether to release the participant(s).

Participants who drove themselves (and any other participants) will be dismissed to their own vehicle.

YOUTH VGROUPS

Participants who were dropped off will be dismissed to the appropriate party. Participants who drove themselves (and any other participants) will be dismissed to their own vehicle.

# SECTION 6: SAFETY & SECURITY

## SECURITY

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

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

Due to the nature of child custody laws, volunteers must be diligent in ensuring the correct people are picking up their children. Please be aware that only parents with custody of their child may pick up the child. If there are any questions regarding a child may be released to someone, immediately contact the Children’s Ministry Coordinator.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

**Medical Concerns**

Immediately report any medical needs or concerns to the Children’s Ministry Coordinator or the Student Pastor. If in doubt, call 911.

**Hazardous Weather**

In the event of dangerous weather, volunteers should listen for instructions by a staff member.

* + Stay calm.
	+ Move your classroom in a quiet and orderly manner to a bathroom or interior hallway.
	+ Take your classroom roster, and double check that all children are present.
	+ Await further instructions.

**Fire**

Maintaining safety is the top priority in the event of a fire. Every room is equipped with an audible alarm and flashing strobe lights. In the event of a fire, stay calm, get your classroom roster and make sure all children are present. If you are a volunteer who is not assigned to a classroom, report to the nearest classroom to provide assistance or report to a staff person for further instructions. Follow the safest route to the front circle drive.

***Parents may stay with you and assist, but they MAY NOT take their child and leave during an evacuation unless the child has been clearly checked out by the parent with the classroom teacher. Parents must follow check out procedures at all times.***

**Missing children**

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

1. Name/age/sex
2. Color of hair, shirt, and skin
3. Ministry where child was checked-in (infant, toddler, or elementary)

The person reporting the lost child should remain with the staff member until further direction is given by a member of VillageChurch’s staff.

**Media Response**

In the event of a severe accident or death, media will be on site to cover the incident. It is important to remember that anything you say could be mistaken, taken out of context or misquoted. Volunteers are expected to refrain from speaking with the media. If asked by a media member for a statement, please graciously decline and direct them to a VillageChurch staff member.

**SECTION 7: CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

**THE POLICY**

It is the policy of VillageChurch that all Ministers, lay employees, and volunteers are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment and professional relationship at all times. Sexual Misconduct, including child sexual abuse, is not only a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, but also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. Child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct are never permissible and are unacceptable. VillageChurch is committed to preventing child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct on all levels in our Christian community. The Preschool, Children and Student Worker Policy will be used in recruiting and training volunteers and staff personnel who will work with preschoolers, children and students.

This Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy (hereinafter called “Policy”) applies to every Minister of VillageChurch, to every member of VillageChurch’s staff and to every volunteer of VillageChurch.

**This policy is not intended to take the place of a criminal investigation or inhibit anyone from informing the appropriate legal authorities of conduct that person believes to be a violation of the law.**  **This policy should not be construed as in any way limiting a parent’s or any other person’s option to report an allegation of child abuse whether physical, verbal, emotional, or involving child sexual abuse or child molestation to appropriate authorities, if the parent or other person believes it is necessary and/or proper to do so.**

**As addressed in more detail in the section on Procedures, Ministers and the Pastors are under an obligation to report in accordance with requirement of S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-310 (2010) when in the person's professional capacity the person has received information which gives the person reason to believe that a child has been or may be “abused or neglected,” as defined in § 63-7-20.**

**Definition of Child Sexual Abuse**:

Any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child." (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992)

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready. Child sexual abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following touching or non-touching activities:

Touching:

• Fondling

• Oral

• Genital and anal penetration

• Intercourse

• Forcible rape

Non-Touching:

• Display of pornographic material

• Obscene phone calls

• Exhibitionism

• Sexual gestures, jokes and statements

• Actions or Speech designed to arouse sexually

• Actions or Works designed to encourage sexual experimentation

**Definition of Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse: non-accidental contact that results in pain or injury to a minor, regardless if it leaves a bruise or mark, by a person with apparent or real authority.

**Definition of Emotional Abuse**

An attempt by a person with apparent or real authority to control a minor’s thoughts or actions, by words or silence, to gain compliance or dependency.

**REPORTING PROCEDURES**

**Any observed, suspected or reported child sexual abuse or child molestation should be reported immediately to any Minister or the Pastor. If a Minister or the Pastor is not available, the incident may be reported to the Children’s Ministry Coordinator. The Minister (or Children’s Ministry Coordinator) will notify the Pastor.**

**RESPONSE, INVESTIGATION, AND DISCIPLINARY POLICY**

**Definitions**

**Accused** is the term used for the person against whom a claim of sexual misconduct is made.

**Accuser** is the term used for the person claiming to have been the victim of sexual misconduct by a minister, staff person, or volunteer.  Other persons may also report an allegation (family member, friend, or colleague of the Accuser, another minister or church member, etc.)

**Advocate** is a friend, family member, or pastor (other than a current minister of VillageChurch) who is permitted to accompany the Accused or Accuser to meetings in order to give moral support and advice.  The Accused and Accuser will select their own Advocates.

**Allegations** are assertions that allege an offense was committed by a Minister, employee or volunteer.  The term refers to assertions made prior to the issuance of a Report, if any, by the Investigating Team.

**Child Sexual Abuse** includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child under the age of eighteen and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or a third person.  The behavior may or may not involve touching.  Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child.  Child sexual abuse is a felony (according to federal and state law).

**Contact Person**is the Response Team Member assigned to a particular case.

**Investigating Team** consists of three members of the Response Team assigned by the Chair of the Response Team to investigate and consider the Allegations made against an Accused.  The Investigating Team shall determine whether there are reasonable grounds or cause to believe there has been a violation of this Policy.

**Pastoral Care Givers**are assigned by the Response Team to provide pastoral care to those affected by allegations of sexual misconduct.

**Report** is the formal written statement made by the Investigating Team against a Minister, employee, or volunteer after it has investigated the Allegations and it determines that there are reasonable grounds or cause to believe a violation of this Policy has occurred which should be brought before the Review Team.

**Response Team** is an eight-member team appointed by the Pastor or his designate.  These persons should be selected on the basis of special skills, and with substantial knowledge of human resources and knowledge of liability exposure.  Members serve staggered terms of four years.  Members may be appointed to serve for three consecutive terms.  Responsibilities of the Response Team are:

1.    To fulfill the procedures of this Policy and the Preschool, Children, Student Worker policy.

2.   To make provision for pastoral care to all parties, to help all parties understand the process, to coordinate the implementation of the process, to help train and give counsel to all parties.

3.  To review this Policy and the Preschool, Children, and Student Worker policy to make recommendations for change.

4.  To serve as an Investigating Team.

In the event a member of the Response Team or any family member, relative or personal friend of a member of the Response Team is named as an Accused or an Accuser, or is the ongoing pastor or Pastoral Care Giver of an Accused or Accuser that member shall be relieved of service on the Response Team until the case in question is completed.  (Upon notification, the Pastor or his designate may name a replacement for the duration of the suspension period.).

**Review Team**is a three-person committee.  If any one or more of these persons is not available or unable to serve, the Senior Pastor or his designate may appoint another person to fill the vacancy.  The purpose of the Review Team is to receive the Report, if any, from the Investigating Team and act on the Report as it (the Review Team) deems appropriate.

**Sexual misconduct** includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1.    Child sexual abuse as defined above.

2.   Rape or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation.

3.   Sexual conduct (such as offensive, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unwelcome touching or fondling) which is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another

**Procedures**

The procedures outlined below should be followed when the Church receives an Allegation of sexual misconduct.  Occasionally, however, the unique circumstances of a case may require a change in the procedures.

1.  When a written or oral Allegation of sexual misconduct is received, the Pastor shall immediately (within three days) refer it to the Chair of the Response Team.

A.  In addition, and not in lieu of this procedure, if the written or oral Allegation gives the Minister or Pastor reason to believe that a sexual offense as defined by the laws of the State of South Carolina was perpetrated by a parent, guardian or other person responsible for the child’s welfare and the child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by the alleged act, the Minister or Pastor shall immediately report the alleged act orally by telephone or otherwise to the county department of social services or to a law enforcement agency in the county where the child resides or is found.

B.  For purposes of subsection 1.A. above, a “person responsible for a child’s welfare” includes the child’s parent, guardian, foster parent, an operator, employee, or caregiver, as defined by S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-20 (2016), of a public or private residential home, institution, agency, or child daycare facility or an adult who has assumed the role or responsibility of a parent or guardian for the child, but who does not necessarily have legal custody of the child. A person whose only role is as a caregiver and whose contact is only incidental with a child, such as a babysitter or a person who has only incidental contact but may not be a caretaker, has not assumed the role or responsibility of a parent or guardian.

C.  If a Minister or Pastor has received information in his/her professional capacity which gives him/her reason to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would constitute a sexual offense as defined by the laws of the State of South Carolina, but the Minister or Pastor believes that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the Minister or Pastor must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

2.   Ordinarily, within three days of receiving an Allegation the Chair of the Response Team assigns a member of the Response Team to serve as Contact Person for the case.  Ordinarily, the Chair will not be a Contact Person.  The three primary roles of the Response Team are:

A.   To make provision for pastoral care to all parties throughout the process; and

B.    To coordinate the implementation of the process.

C.   To provide members (other than the person assigned as Contact Person) to serve as an Investigating Team, if one is necessary.

*The Response Team and the Accuser*

3.    Ordinarily within three days of receiving an Allegation the Chair of the Response Team contacts the Accuser and assigns a Pastoral Care Giver for the Accuser (and family).

Note:  the same Pastoral Care Giver will not be assigned to both the Accuser and Accused.  The Pastoral Care Givers are assigned from a pool of people previously recruited by the Response Team, from other pastors or pastoral care specialists, and shall not be members of the Response Team.  The Chair of the Response Team always consults with the Accuser and the Accused to obtain their consent for the Pastoral Care Giver assigned to them.

4.  If the Accuser is a person other than the parent/guardian of the alleged victim, the alleged victim’s parent(s)/guardian(s) will ordinarily be notified by the Chair of the Response Team of the Allegation within three days of their receipt by him.  The parent(s)/guardian(s) is (are) informed that a waiver of confidentiality is necessary.  This waiver will be limited to any proceedings arising from or related to the carrying out of this of Policy.  The parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be provided a copy of this Policy.

5.    Ordinarily within three days of appointment, the Contact Person and Pastoral Care Giver arrange a meeting with the Accuser. They inform the Accuser that an Advocate and legal counsel (at the Accuser’s own cost) may also attend the meeting.  In addition, if the Accuser is a minor child, the Accuser and his parent(s)/guardian(s) will notified of their right to attend the meeting.

6.  The Contact Person, Pastoral Care Giver, Advocate and if desired, legal counsel, meet together with the Accuser for the following purposes:

A.  They help the Accuser understand this Policy and possible disciplinary procedures;

B.  The Accuser is offered assistance to arrange for counseling.  If the Accuser needs financial help to pay for therapy, a request may be made to the Pastor.

C.  All parties are encouraged to keep this matter in strictest confidence.

D.   If the Allegation is not in written form, the Accuser is informed that for the process to continue, the Allegation must be put in writing.  The Contact Person, Advocate or Pastoral Care Giver may assist the Accuser to prepare a written allegation.

E.  The Accuser is informed that a waiver of confidentiality is necessary.  This waiver will be limited to any proceedings arising from or related to the carrying out of this of Policy.

7.   The Chair of the Response Team asks the Pastor to notify the Church's insurance carrier if necessary to comply with any requirement of the insurance policy.

8. Ordinarily within ten days of the meeting with Accuser, the written Allegations are given to the Contact Person who delivers the written Allegations to the Chair of the Response Team. The Chair of the Response Team shall then appoint an Investigating Team consisting of three members of the Response Team. The Investigating Team shall investigate and consider the Allegations. The Contact Person shall not be a member of the Investigating Team, but may be consulted by the Investigating Team, as the Investigating Team deems necessary.

*The Investigating Team and the Accused*

9. Ordinarily within ten days of appointment, a representative of the Investigating Team shall arrange a meeting with the Accused. Information passed on to the Accused concerning the meeting to be held shall include the following:

* 1. That an Advocate chosen by the Accused and legal counsel may attend the meeting.
	2. That the Response Team will be in contact with him/her in order to assign a Pastoral Care Giver for the Accused and family.
	3. That the Accused has the right to be represented by legal counsel (at the Accused’s own cost) and the right to refuse to comment on the allegation.
	4. The Accused shall be reminded of his/her promise to voluntarily remove themselves from service in Preschool, Children and Student activities sponsored by VillageChurch until the allegation is resolved and he/she is permitted to return to those activities by VillageChurch.

10. The Investigating Team shall meet with the Accused, Pastoral Care Giver and Advocate (and legal counsel, if the Accused so elects) for the following purposes:

A. To review with the Accused this policy and the possible disciplinary procedures. The Accused shall be given a copy of this Policy during this meeting;

B. To provide the written Allegations to the Accused;

C. To instruct the Accused not to have further contact with the Accuser of the Accuser's family;

D. To offer the Accused assistance in arranging for counseling. If the Accused needs financial help to pay for therapy, a request may be made to the Pastor; and

E. To encourage all parties to keep this matter in strict confidence.

*The Investigation*

11. The Investigating Team shall conduct an inquiry to determine whether or not there are probable grounds or cause to believe that an offense was committed. In making this inquiry, the Investigating Team may conduct such investigation as it deems necessary including interviewing the Accuser, the Accused, potential witnesses or other persons who might have knowledge of the facts. At a minimum, however, the Investigating Team should interview the Accused. Any interview with either the Accuser or the Accused shall necessarily include their Pastoral Care Giver and Advocate (and legal counsel, if applicable). Neither the Accuser nor the Accused shall be permitted to attend any interview other than his/her own.

12. If the Investigating Team determines that there are no probable grounds or cause to believe that a violation of this Policy occurred, it will promptly (ordinarily within 3 days of completion of its investigation) inform the Chair of the Response Team in writing of its determination. Thereafter, the Investigating Team shall meet separately with the Accuser and Accused along with the Pastor and Pastoral Care Givers to explain its decision. If the Accuser is someone other than the parent/guardian of the alleged victim, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be informed of the Investigating Team’s decision. The Pastoral Care Givers will continue to offer pastoral care to all parties and no further action will be taken at this time.

13. If the Investigating Team determines that there are probable grounds or cause to believe that a violation of this Policy occurred, it should promptly prepare a written Report (ordinarily within 3 days of completion of its investigation) and notify the Chair of the Response Team, Accused, Accuser, the Review Team, and the Pastor of its decision. If the Accuser is someone other than the parent/guardian of the alleged victim, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be informed of the Investigating Team’s decision. Only the Review Team should be provided a copy of the Report.

*Referral to the Review Team*

14. If the Investigating Team determines that there are probable grounds or cause to believe that a violation of this Policy occurred, it should forward its Report to the Review Team for consideration of possible disciplinary action.

15. The Review Team upon receipt of the Report should initially consider whether temporary limitations should be imposed on the Accused pending resolution of the matter.

A. If, in the Review Team’s opinion, there are compelling reasons, the Review Team, in consultation with the Pastor, may place the Accused Minister or employee on Administrative Leave (with or without pay) pending resolution of the matter. Specific limitations shall be communicated in writing to the Accused, as soon as reasonably possible, but generally within three days of the referral of the issue to the Review Team. During the period of Administrative Leave, if any, the Accused should refrain from the exercise of any function of the previous position.

B. If, in the Review Team’s opinion, there are compelling reasons, the Review Team may suspend the Accused pending resolution of the Charge. Specific limitations shall be communicated in writing to the Accused, as soon as reasonably possible, but generally within three days of the referral of the issue to the Review Team. During the period of suspension, if any, the Accused should refrain from the exercise of any function of the previous position.

***This process, items 1-15, will be carried out with no undue delay.***

16. The Review Team should meet to review the Report. If the Review Team believes it needs additional information, it should contact the Investigating Team and ask that additional information be provided. If necessary, the Investing Team may reopen its investigation for limited purpose of obtaining the information requested by the Review Committee.

17. After reviewing the Report, and any additional information requested, the Review Team should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate. It should also consider whether appropriate legal authorities should be contacted.

18. If the Review Team determines disciplinary action is required:

A. In the case of a Minister or employee, the Review Team will recommend to the Pastor an appropriate form of discipline, up to and including immediate dismissal from employment or termination of the pastoral or ministerial relationship.

B. In the case of a volunteer, the Review Committee will determine an appropriate discipline, up to and including immediate dismissal from all volunteer positions involving Preschooler, Children, Student activities; however, the Review Committee may not bar the volunteer from worship services.

C. The Review Team will inform the Accuser, Pastor and Chair of the Response Team that disciplinary action has been taken. If the Accuser is someone other than the parent/guardian of the alleged victim, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be informed that appropriate disciplinary action has been taken. Only the Pastor and those persons who must be informed to carry out the discipline will be informed of the nature and extent of the discipline.

19. If the Review Team determines that no violation of this Policy has occurred and consequently no disciplinary action is required, the Review Team shall meet separately with the Accuser and Accused along with the Pastor and Pastoral Care Givers to explain its decision. If the Accuser is someone other than the parent/guardian of the alleged victim, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be informed of the Review Team’s decision. The Chair of the Response Team will be informed that the proceeding has been concluded. The Pastoral Care Givers will continue to offer pastoral care to all parties and no further action will be taken at this time.

20. Members of the Response Team who are not members of the Investigating Team and Pastoral Caregivers should continue to be available to offer care and guidance to the parties involved until such care is no longer needed.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

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

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

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

I understand that I do not have a right to serve as a volunteer at VillageChurch and that VillageChurch reserves the right to ask me to step down at any time. I further understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of VillageChurch policies and procedures manual.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Signature Date

Printed Name