



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

This document lays out the governing policies and procedures for all official Redeemer events which take place on Redeemer's campus where children are present. Entities which are not affiliated with Redeemer but make use of any of our facilities are required to have a policy for themselves as part of our "Facility Usage Agreement."

This document applies evenly to users of our facilities, volunteers, staff members, and pastors. Violations to this policy are disciplinable offenses and may result in loss of facility usage, opportunities, or termination.



## **Welcome to Redeemer!**

Redeemer Church aims to provide a safe, secure environment for children, adults, and their families to hear and enjoy the gospel by preventing abuse.

We take very seriously our responsibility to care for children. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this manual provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for all facility users, volunteers, staff members, and pastors. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

This document is divided into sections with each section having specific, tailored policies related to the ministry of each age group. It is important that every user of our facilities, volunteers, staff members, and pastors be familiar with the policies of all areas. While there is significant overlap between the policies, the requirements for each age-group are significant.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

The Board of Elders

May 2024



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# Executive Summary and Key Takeaways

**Purpose:** To ensure a safe and secure environment for children and their families at Redeemer Church by implementing strict child protection policies and procedures.

**Scope:** Applies to all official Redeemer events on the campus where children are present, including facility users, volunteers, staff members, and pastors.

## Key Safety Steps

1. **Child Protection Training:** Mandatory for all volunteers, staff, and facility users, renewed every three years.
2. **Screening Process:** Includes application, interviews, and reference checks for those working with children.
3. **Policies & Procedures:** All workers must read, understand, and agree to comply with the child protection policies.
4. **Criminal Background Check:** Required for all staff and volunteers involved in children's activities.

## Key Points

- **Zero Tolerance for Abuse:** Any suspicion of abuse must be reported immediately to law enforcement and church authorities.
- **Two-Adult Rule:** At least two adults must be present during any activity involving children.
- **Appropriate Touch:** Physical contact should be age-appropriate and never coercive or oppressive.
- **Bathroom Guidelines:** Strict supervision required; no adult should not share use of a bathroom while supervising children.
- **Discipline:** Physical discipline is prohibited; time-outs and verbal redirection are used.
- **Reporting Violations:** All staff and volunteers must report any policy violations or suspicious behavior immediately.
- **Security and Safety Team:** A designated team responsible for ensuring adherence to child protection policies and handling incidents.

## Enforcement:

- Violations can result in disciplinary action, including dismissal or termination.
- Internal and external reporting mechanisms are in place to handle incidents and ensure compliance with the law.



## Definitions and Notes

**Abuse** – Abuse is defined herein in accord with Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-1; and in accord with 42 U.S.C. 5101 *et seq*; 42 U.S.C. 5116 *et seq*. (“CAPTA”).

Short, functional definitions are supplied below.

- i. **Physical Abuse:** Violent, non-accidental contact, especially such which results in injury. This includes but is not limited to: striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, tinctures, cuts, and burns. Some physical injuries may not be noticeably evident.
- ii. **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexual activity committed on or allowed to be committed upon a child by a person twenty-one (21) years of age or older, whether at the church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child. Sexual abuse can also take forms that do not include physical touching, such as verbal comments or jokes; pornographic videos or images; obscene phone calls, SMS, or messages through mobile apps; etc.
- iii. **Emotional Abuse:** A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child’s spirit, attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolation, or belittling.

**Appropriate Touch** – Close contact and touch are important parts of establishing human relationships. In a general sense, touch can convey warmth; it can divert aggression, and can provide reassurance, care, and comfort. Touch can communicate an array of feelings or emotions. However, it can also be used in an oppressive, coercive, and punitive manner. Be aware and sensitive to differences in family background, personalities, cultural differences, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate.

To deprive children of physical contact in order to minimize risk of accusation could be damaging in itself. Responses need to balance the need for protection with the need to establish a positive caring environment.<sup>1</sup>

Examples of appropriate touching can be:

- Taking a child’s hand to lead him or her to an activity

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<sup>1</sup> “3.8.4 Touch Guidance”, West Yorkshire Safeguarding Procedures Manual (Accessed June 9, 2018), [http://kirkleeschildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/g\\_touch.html](http://kirkleeschildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/g_touch.html).



- Taking both hands to establish attention
- Patting on the head, hand, shoulder, or back for affirmation
- Putting an arm around the shoulder for comforting or quieting
- Holding gently by the shoulder or the hand to keep his or her attention while redirecting his or her behavior.
- Physically removing a child from imminent danger

**Child** – Anyone who has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday; OR, anyone who has not reached his or her nineteenth birthday and is need of protective services but does not qualify for adult protective services (cf. Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-1).

**Facility User** – A legitimate “Facility User” is an individual or group who has been granted authority and access to supervise or lead an approved event on Redeemer’s campus per the usage agreement. A person ceases to be a legitimate “Facility User” if the agreement is violated or campus is trespassed.

**Grooming** – Grooming is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse.

**Harassment** – Harassment is defined herein in accord with Code of Alabama 1975 § 13A-11-8(a). In short, a person is guilty of harassment when an aggravating comment or conduct includes “a threat, verbal or nonverbal, made with the intent to carry out the threat” such that a target fears for his or her safety.

**Inappropriate Touch** – Inappropriate touch is unfitting, unsolicited, or unwarranted touch. It can also be used in an oppressive, coercive and punitive manner. *Inappropriate touch might not always be sexual in nature*, but it may be. Inappropriate touch includes the following:

- Kissing a child/ coaxing a child to kiss you;
- Extended hugging;
- Tickling or petting;
- Touching any area of a child’s body that would be covered by a bathing suit;
- Coaxing a child over the age of 2 to sit in your lap

**Mandatory Reporter** – Any person whose profession brings them in contact with children on a daily basis is legally obligated to report signs of suspected child abuse or neglect (Cf., Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-3). Further, all adults who have suspicion or knowledge of abuse are



legally obligated to report signs of suspected child abuse or neglect. Failure to do so is a crime in the state of Alabama (Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-13).

**Neglect** – Neglect is defined herein in accord with Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-1; and in accord with 42 U.S.C. 5101 *et seq*; 42 U.S.C. 5116 *et seq*. (“CAPTA”): “Negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, supervision, clothing, or shelter.”

**Pastors (i.e., Elders)** – Pastors; and lay elders and ministerial staff members (cf. “Redeemer Church *Book of Order*”).

**Staff members** – Paid auxiliary church staff and/or paid helpers (cf. “Redeemer Church *Book of Order*”).

**Student** – A participating child (Cf., “Child”) in the Student Ministry of Redeemer who has at least entered the sixth grade; but has not yet or graduated from high school or an equivalent within the last three months, or not yet reached his or her nineteenth birthday, whichever comes first.

**Volunteers** - One who voluntarily offers his services in any capacity; one who of his own free will takes part in any enterprise.





# Overview of Redeemer's Abuse Prevention Measures

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, Redeemer requires all facility users, volunteers, staff members, and pastors working with children to complete FOUR SAFETY STEPS before ministry work or volunteer placements begin. These steps may be completed asynchronously or concurrently, but each step must be completed.

## **STEP ONE: Child Protection Training**

Redeemer's policies and procedures require that all facility users, volunteers, and staff members avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the Redeemer's Safety Team. All facility users, volunteers, and staff members should have a basic understanding of how to keep children safe.

To equip all facility users, volunteers, staff members, Redeemer requires all staff members and volunteers to complete child protection training. This training will be renewed every three years, or following a major event at a nearby church within 50 miles.

## **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

All facility users, volunteers, staff members, and pastors working or serving with children are required to complete Redeemer's Screening Process, which may include up-to:

- an Employment Application (employees only);
- a Screening Application (employees and volunteers);
- a face-to-face interview or conversation with a member of the Safety Team (employees and volunteers); and
- references to be checked (employees and volunteers).

A volunteer candidate will have been a "known individual" of Redeemer for at least six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children. There are instances where a volunteer may not be a covenant member (e.g., a teenager awaiting baptism), but under no circumstance can a volunteer be said to be "unknown" by a reasonable person. Candidates will be approved by the Safety Team before proceeding to Step Three.



## STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers 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 he or she agrees to comply with policy requirements. A record shall be kept in the church office.

## STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

Redeemer requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required. A record shall be kept in the church office.

# Overview of Child Safety Policy

## DISQUALIFICATION FROM WORKING WITH CHILDREN

No person shall be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee or exert control or oversight over children who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made:

- Any offense against a child as outlined by federal or state law;
- A prior criminal history of an offense against a child;
- And/or a misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by federal or state law that is classified as sexual abuse, indecency with a child or adult, assault of a child or adult, injury to a child or adult, abandoning or endanger a child, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, or domestic violence.

## ABUSE TOLERANCE

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



In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any *suspected abuse or neglect* (physical, emotional, or sexual), it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to law enforcement or worker with the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR).

After alerting appropriate authority, the individual who reported should notify an immediate supervisor or Pastor whose duty it will be to then alert the Senior Pastor—or, in the absence of the Senior Pastor, the most senior-level pastor.<sup>2</sup> This report shall do two things. First, the Senior Pastor will make a separate report with authorities. Second, the report shall trigger an internal review of the incident by the Safety Team or the authority designated by that team. The offending individual will be removed from volunteering until the investigation is completed.

To this end, suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken earnestly and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Huntsville Police Department, DHR, Madison County Sheriff's Department, or the Alabama State Police.

**As a condition of their employment, Redeemer pastors and staff shall cooperate with the law enforcement or DHR investigations.**

## **REPORTING POLICY VIOLATIONS, SUSPICIOUS AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Redeemer is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of policy violation will be taken seriously by the pastors and Safety Teams.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any *policy violation or suspicious and inappropriate behavior*, it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to their direct supervisor, a pastor, or a member of the Safety Team whose duty it will be to then alert the Senior Pastor. This report shall trigger an internal review of the incident by the Safety Team or the authority designated by that team. The offending individual will be removed from volunteering until the investigation is completed.

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 an immediate supervisor or pastor whose duty it will be to then alert the Senior Pastor.

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<sup>2</sup> This language reflects the wording of Redeemer's *Book of Order*.



## ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Redeemer's 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 positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor.

## TWO-ADULT RULE

All activities involving children must have at least two adults supervising at all times.

**Related adults shall count as only one adult. Student volunteers under the age of eighteen shall not count as an adult.**

## KNOWN INDIVIDUALS IN GOOD STANDING

Only known individuals of Redeemer in good standing may volunteer in areas serving children. Further, no one who has been attending Redeemer less than six months may serve in any area serving children.

# Reporting Policy Violations, Abuse, or Suspicions of Abuse

## REPORTING POLICY VIOLATIONS

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***All staff and volunteers at Redeemer are required to report policy violations, suspicious, or inappropriate behavior to an immediate supervisor, a pastor, or a member of the Safety Team.***

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All questions or concerns related to suspicious and inappropriate behavior or suspected grooming behavior should be immediately reported to their direct supervisor, a pastor, or a member of the Safety Team. The individual should complete Redeemers internal report form, "Communicate Concern." This form can be accessed via the "Abuse Prevention and Reporting" link found in the



footer of every page of Redeemer's website This verbal or written report shall trigger an internal review of the incident by the Safety Team or the authority designated by that team.

## CONSEQUENCES OF SUSPECTED POLICY 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 removed from participation in all activities directly involving children.

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 Redeemer.

If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Redeemer following an investigation by the Security and Safety Team and—when applicable—recommendation to the personnel subcommittee of the elder board.

Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at Redeemer.

## REPORTING ABUSE AND SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO AUTHORITIES

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***All adults are legally required to report known or suspicions of child abuse or neglect to law enforcement or DHR.***

***Following that report, the individual should make a written report to an immediate supervisor, a pastor, or a member of the Safety Team.***

***To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call either the Huntsville Police Department at 256-722-7100 or the Madison County Department of Human Resources at 256-427-6200.***

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**Adults in Alabama who have knowledge or suspicion of abuse are mandatory reporters.** Alabama law states that any person with knowledge or suspicion of abuse is “required to report orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, and shall be followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority.” **Failure to do so is a misdemeanor crime that can lead to imprisonment and/or fines.** Good faith reports are immune from criminal and civil liability in the state of Alabama (cf. Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-9). Reports can be made anonymously.

After causing a report with appropriate officials, all questions or concerns related to abuse or suspicions of abuse should be immediately reported to a direct supervisor, a pastor, or a member of



the Safety Team whose duty it will be to then alert the Senior Pastor. This report shall trigger an internal review of the incident by the Safety Team or the authority designated by that team.

## **REDEEMER'S PASTORS' DUTY TO REPORT**

**The ordained elders and pastors at Redeemer Church, Huntsville are not permitted by the terms of their employment or appointment to exercise the “privileges of communication” afforded by Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence.** Electing to do so may be grounds for immediate termination without severance.

**In all other cases not defined by Rule 505, Alabama clergy are mandatory reporters. Non-ordained ministers, directors, etc. are not eligible for “privileges of communication” per Rule 505, but instead, they are mandatory reporters according to Code of Alabama 1975 § 26-14-3.**

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer working in any ministry with children, a member of the Safety Team or the authority designated by that team will speak with the person or volunteer who made the report to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Senior Pastor will be notified and given the full report as soon as possible.

In the event of any knowledge or reasonable cause to believe abuse has occurred, the Senior Pastor shall make a report with law enforcement or DHR in addition to any reports which may have already been filed.

## **WHEN TO REPORT ABUSE**

**When there is reason to believe a child is being abused, neglected, dependent or a victim of human trafficking, concerned individuals should contact the Department of Human Resources at 256-427-6200.**

**If the child appears to be in imminent danger or is in need of immediate protection, call 911 or the local police department.**

If you are unsure as to whether abuse has occurred or not, consider calling ChildHelp, 1-800-4-A-CHILD. This hotline will help you determine if your observation constitutes abuse. They will also help you make a report.



## **ABUSE/NEGLECT OR CULTURE/POVERTY?**

Concerned individuals need to know they have a duty to report suspected child abuse. DHR has the authority and the obligation to assure that reports meet the statutory definition of abuse, neglect or dependency before a formal child protection investigation is set in motion. In those cases where the referral is not clearly one of abuse, neglect or dependency, but indicates service needs, DHR attempts to be responsive and find appropriate services.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, Alabama distinguishes between poverty and neglect. It also makes allowances for cultural diversity and religious observance.

Examples are:

- A child who is improperly dressed, though parents use all available resources to provide;
- A child who is provided nutritious food irregularly or insufficiently though parents use all available resources to provide;
- Hygiene, that although not optimal, does not adversely affect the well-being of the child;
- A small child who is ambulatory and who has minor marks in routine areas such as the knees and the reporter has no reason to believe the injuries were caused by abuse or neglect;
- Corporal punishment, even if mild bruising is visible;<sup>4</sup>
- The alleged victim of maltreatment is age 18 or older. This falls beyond the purview of child protection. Adults suffering from maltreatment should contact law enforcement.
- Abuse or neglect committed by someone other than the parent, guardian or person exercising custodial control or supervision (such as a friend, neighbor, stranger, etc.) should be made to local law enforcement or prosecutors.

In most cases, only DHR and law enforcement is qualified to determine whether an action which appears to be abuse or neglect is actually a matter of culture or poverty.

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<sup>3</sup> Child Protective Services, "Child Abuse/Neglect Allegations and Definitions," Revision 54, September 1, 2023, Alabama Department of Human Resources, <https://dhr.alabama.gov/>, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> "Child Abuse/Neglect Allegations and Definitions," 5.



## HOW TO REPORT ABUSE

To report child abuse and neglect committed by a parent, guardian or person exercising custodial control or supervision of a child, or abuse by a non-caretaker in cases of human trafficking, call either the Huntsville Police Department at 256-722-7100 or the Madison County Department of Human Resources at 256-427-6200.

Reports cannot be made via email.

## RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE AT REDEEMER

Redeemer's Pastors will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs, including notifying the Safety Team that an investigation has been initiated.

The non-offending family shall be notified that a report of abuse or suspicion of abuse has occurred.

**It shall be the policy of Redeemer to never reveal the identity of a child or the child's family who suffered abuse.**

**As it cooperates with the law enforcement agencies, it shall be the policy of Redeemer to not reveal the identity of the accused until law enforcement or state authorities conclude initial investigation and press charges.**

Pending the authorities' investigation, the pastors will initiate the process of church discipline. The required characteristic of being "above reproach" should condition the process. Also, the incident shall trigger an internal review by the Safety Team or the authority designated by that team.

**It shall be the policy of Redeemer that all employees of Redeemer will cooperate fully with an investigation by law enforcement or DHR. Failure to do so will be a terminable offense.**





# Redeemer Security and Safety Team

## **SAFETY TEAM**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Redeemer will appoint and maintain a Security and Safety team. This provides for the physical security of the building and spaces, ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect in the process. They also ensure we have plans in place for safe and orderly administration of first aid, evacuation plans (fire & ASI), and more. Each person on this team has a passion for wise and temperate action, but each person is also committed to ensuring our worship gatherings are orderly and honoring to God.

Related to that mission is the protection of the children's and student ministries of Redeemer Church through the implementation, application, and evaluation of Redeemer's Child Protection Policies and practice.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety Team is to enable Redeemer Children's and Student Ministry to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

## **COMPOSITION**

It shall consist of six (6) members, two (2) of whom shall be nominated each December to serve a three (3) year term with a new member rolling on each year, and until their successor shall be elected with at least one being a volunteer in ministry for children at Redeemer.

The Safety Team will be comprised of the following members:

1. The Chairman of the Elder Board;
2. The Senior Pastor or a deputy;
3. The church administrator;
4. The lead of security detail;
5. A nominated member of the congregation;
6. A nominated member of the congregation



## MEETINGS

The Senior Pastor (or his deputy) will chair the meeting of the Safety Team on schedule determined to best discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Team 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 Team will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Redeemer policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Make regular visits auditing and monitoring all ministry to children and student programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Redeemer pastors regarding safety issues.

## Children's Ministry Child Protection Plan

Monitoring of staff members and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide Safety Team members the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interaction with children.

## BUILDING SAFETY

The Security and Safety Team will be responsible for ensuring that the nursery and children's area is secure during Sunday classes or programming.

No child will ever be left unattended in the nursery and children's area or on the church's property during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's 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.) After every programming event, children's ministry



staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving for children.

On the church's property, 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). Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area on the premises. Without parental consent, preschool aged children are not to be taken outside of the building after being checked in, except in the case of an emergency (e.g. fire).

Whenever possible, a member of the security team is to be posted in the nursery/preschool wing whenever supervision is being provided on campus. This security team member will 1) observe and supervise the check-in/check-out times and assist as needed, 2) serve as a hall monitor, allowing the Redeemer Kids team to provide care to children, 3) aid as an additional layer of supervisory security for our children, and finally 4) function as a first responder in the event of an emergency on the church's campus.

## WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

Redeemer is committed to providing adequate supervision in all children's ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

Age of Children	Number of Children requiring 2 Adults	Number of Children requiring 3 Adults	Number of Children requiring 4 Adults
0-18 months	1-6 children	7-9 children	10-12 children
18 months-Age 3	1-10 children	11-15 children	16-20 children
Age 4-Age 12	1-16 children	17-24 children	25-32 children
Age 13-Age 18	1-20 children	21-30 children	31-40 children

If a room is 'out of ratio', it is the responsibility of workers to immediately notify the program supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker-to-children ratios into compliance with Church policy. If substitutes cannot be found, a member of pastoral staff will direct the elders and deacons to substitute. If after every diligent attempt has been made to staff the room but ratio is still not met, the room shall be shut down until adequate supervision is available.



## DISCIPLINE

Parents are primarily responsible for the compliance of their children in children's ministry activities. This is because the children's ministry of Redeemer is not a childcare service but a discipleship ministry of the church.

Repeat offenses or particularly unruly or disruptive behavior as determined by any particular teacher on any particular day will result in the child rejoining their parent. In other words, there is not a minimum disruptive threshold before parents will be called to pick up their child.

Should occasional discipline be in order, 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 and may in fact be illegal.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. According to Alabama guidelines, physical punishment, including corporal punishment, not administered by a child's parent may constitute abuse.<sup>5</sup>

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. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Charlie, 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.
4. Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.

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<sup>5</sup> "Child Abuse/Neglect Allegations and Definitions," 5.



5. 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).
6. 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. ("Gracie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.")
7. 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 immediately to parents and the nursery coordinator or Children's Minister.

## **BITING POLICY**

### ***Rationale and Philosophy***

Biting is a common, developmentally normal behavior in early childhood—especially among toddlers ages 12 to 30 months. About 30% of toddlers will bite at least once, often due to teething, frustration, sensory exploration, or difficulty with verbal expression. Biting usually resolves by the time a child grows into preschool age. Persistent biting after the age of four or the acquisition of language skills may be a sign pediatric, developmental intervention is needed. Biting presents a safety risk that must be managed carefully—especially in short-duration care settings like ours.<sup>6</sup>

Redeemer Church provides Sunday-only childcare, and we are not equipped to offer ongoing intervention or weekday support. Therefore, our policy prioritizes group safety while also recognizing the developmental stage of young children.

### ***Prevention & Immediate Response***

To reduce the likelihood of biting, our trained volunteers will:

- Observe children closely for signs of frustration or overstimulation.
- Provide age-appropriate teething and sensory items.
- Use calm, clear language to teach safe behavior (e.g., "We don't bite people.").

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<sup>6</sup> "Biting: A Fact Sheet for Families," Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, accessed June 14, 2025, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/biting-fact-sheet-families>.



If a bite occurs:

- First aid is given to the child bitten—washing the area, applying ice as needed, and advising the parent to seek care if skin is broken.
- The biter is gently but firmly removed from the immediate activity and reminded: “Biting hurts. We use our words, not our teeth.”
- Both parents are notified in person.
- An incident report is completed and logged by staff for review.

### ***Protective Removal After Repeated Biting***

While we understand that biting may occur, we also have a responsibility to protect all children in our care.

If a child bites on more than one occasion within a four-week span, or if their behavior presents an ongoing risk to others, we will require the child to remain with their parent during future Sundays until the behavior has clearly resolved. This is left up to the discretion of the children's ministry director, assistant pastor over family ministry, or elder boards.

Biting is typically a short-lived behavior that most children outgrow by age 3 to 4, as verbal and self-regulation skills develop. For many children, biting phases resolve within a few weeks to several months. If biting persists or escalates beyond this window, especially past age 4, experts encourage families to consult with their pediatrician or an early childhood specialist for additional guidance.<sup>7</sup>

This is not a disciplinary action—it is a protective measure. Because we cannot offer support throughout the week or individualized intervention plans, we ask parents to take the lead in addressing and preventing recurring behaviors.

### ***Monitoring and Safety Review***

All biting incidents will be recorded in our Incident Log. The Safety Team will review incidents quarterly, identify patterns, and recommend additional safety procedures or volunteer training as needed.

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<sup>7</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), “Understanding and Responding to Children Who Bite,” NAEYC, accessed June 14, 2025, <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/understanding-and-responding-children-who-bite>.



## **APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH**

Close contact and touch are important parts of establishing human relationships. In a general sense, touch can convey warmth; it can divert aggression, and can provide reassurance, care, and comfort. Touch can communicate an array of feelings or emotions. However, it can also be used in an oppressive, coercive, and punitive manner. Be aware and sensitive to differences in family background, personalities, cultural differences, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. C.f., § “Definitions and Notes.”

## **BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES**

### **NURSERY CHILDREN**

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

Adults themselves should never use the bathroom while taking children to the bathroom. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children use the bathroom prior to entering their classroom.

#### **Diapering**

1. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
2. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
3. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded following operating procedures prescribed by the children’s ministry (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”) Parents are also entitled to opt out of diapering and can be notified if a child needs a diaper change.
4. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
5. Children should be changed on changing stations only, with openness and observability, while respecting the child.

#### **Toilet training**

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
3. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
4. Parents should be consulted on each child’s progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by



parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card (“Susan can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”).

5. Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present.
6. “Accidents” should be handled by 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.

### ***School-Age Children***

Screened adults should ensure the bathroom is empty before allowing children to enter. School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom. Trips to the bathroom should always occur in groups of at least three.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

### ***Children with Special Needs***

Parents will offer instructions to staff members or volunteers on how to care for and change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all special-needs individuals.

## **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN**

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Pastor to Children’s activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.





## RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs 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.

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.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child. Parents should notify the pastoral staff directly should alternate arrangements need to be made.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or a member of the Security and Safety Team before releasing the child.

For children in the nursery, each child is to be given a unique ID that is on their nametag upon entering their respective room. The matching ID is to be given to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians.

*Only the parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians with the corresponding unique ID may pick up the child from the nursery.*

## SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in children's ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

## Student Ministry Child Protection Plan

The Student Ministry is also governed by additional policies. See, "Redeemer Students Volunteer Handout." Whenever there is a conflict between policy documents, this document takes priority.

Monitoring of staff members and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide Safety Team members the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interaction with children.



1. **Each pastor or staff member ministering around children** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures with volunteers.
2. **The Senior Pastor (or his deputy)** conducts an unscheduled observation of the student ministry at least once each quarter.
3. **The Security and Safety Team** audits relevant pastors and staff members at every team meeting to discuss the state of ministry to children at Redeemer, including safety training and procedures.
4. **Elder Board** meet with the relevant pastors and staff members once each year to discuss ministry to children at Redeemer, including safety training and procedures.
5. **A member of pastoral staff** conducts an unscheduled audit of the student ministry at least once each month for programs occurring weekly.

## STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO

Redeemer is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Student Ministry activities and programs:

1. For groups up to and including 10 students, there will be at least 2 staff members or volunteer supervising.
2. For groups ranging from 11 to 29 students, there will be at least 3 staff members or volunteers supervising.
3. For groups larger than 30 students, there will be at least 4 staff members or volunteers supervising, maintaining at least one adult/ten students.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify supervisory staff responsible for the program or event. The responsible supervisory staff member will make a diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

**If the program or event cannot be brought into ratio, it must be terminated.**

## DISCIPLINE

Again, it is the policy of Redeemer that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or students. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction or inappropriate behaviors by students.



If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff members will verbally redirect students involved and will try to avoid physical intervention.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and pastoral staff.

## **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS**

Redeemer recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

### ***Individual Meetings***

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed.

## **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. Sleeping arrangements must be planned and submitted to the parents and pastoral staff at least one week before the event occurs.
2. The 2-adult rule must be followed; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer.
3. All adult leaders must have previously completed the church's screening and training process.
4. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved prior to the activity.
5. As long as any students are awake, trip leaders must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.



6. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies—or movies with nudity, sexuality, or sexual themes—are permitted. The movie shall be announced to parents in advance through writing.
7. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
8. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
9. Staff members and volunteers may need to monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
10. Whenever possible, at least one staff member or volunteer will sleep in the same room (but not same bed) as students, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
11. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

## Additional Policies

### GIFT-GIVING

Staff members and volunteers are discouraged from giving gifts to individual children or their families. While the vast majority of gifts are given in good faith and joyful love, gift-giving is a key tactic used by predators aiming to groom a child and his or her family.

If a gift is to be given, these guidelines should be followed:

- A gift should never be given to a child without the parent or guardian’s permission.
- Gifts should never be given in secret, but they may be anonymous.
- Gifts should never display favoritism.



- Gifts given to children who need special attention should be given in the name of the group, ministry, or church.
- Gifts should meet the child's needs and wants—not an adult's need.
- Gifts should be given for a clear, stated purpose (e.g., birthday, baptism, sympathy, etc.).

## **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 Redeemer program or activity.

## **MEDICATION**

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Children's Ministry areas. No medication will be left in the classroom with a volunteer or a child. A release needs to be obtained for administering medications while away at a retreat, camp, or other church-sponsored activities.

## **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers serving in children or student ministry settings should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the Pastors concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

## **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. Staff members and volunteers shall avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.



2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Redeemer, unless in a dire emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles, per church insurance.

## **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a child in the care of Redeemer 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 ministry programs with minors.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents have an open invitation to observe 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 Redeemer's volunteer application and screening process.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Redeemer is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Redeemer 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 ministry areas serving children (C.f., "Appropriate Touch" and "Inappropriate Touch" in § "Definitions and Notes"):

1. Hugs, 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.
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 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 children's ministries 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 an immediate supervisor or Pastor whose duty it will be to then alert the Senior Pastor.

## SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children 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.

However, it is expected that from time to time student ministry (ref. "Student" in "Definitions") discussions and lessons might address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. At times when sexually-oriented subject matter is planned to be discussed, the outline and discussion should be announced beforehand to all parents in order that they can make an informed decision on whether or not to allow their student to participate.

In any circumstance, the lesson should be tied closely to the Biblical text and should never describe sexual acts in detail. These lessons shall occur in group settings and will convey the church's views on these topics.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Volunteers should never take photographs of children that are not their own and post them online. Photographs which will be used for promotion (e.g., social media, flyers, website, etc.) will be taken by a staff member and/or photographer who has obtained a release for the event to be photographed.



## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on or off of church property or in the presence of children in their care. Transmitting sexually oriented materials to a child may constitute abuse and will trigger an oral or written report to local law enforcement.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Adults should refrain from developing relationships with children and students over electronic mediums (e.g., texting, instant messaging apps, email, etc.). Employees and volunteers are expected to use social media and electronic communication in ways that are public and observable. Employees may have additional responsibilities required in the Employee Handbook.

If an employee or volunteer intends to use electronic mediums to communicate to children or students, that individual shall do so only after receiving permission from the child's parent. Any employee or volunteer working with children or students is also responsible to ensure technology is used appropriately in all circumstances.

Any sexually-oriented conversation between an adult and a child over any form of electronic media is prohibited. Additionally, such conversations may constitute abuse and—accordingly—should be reported to law enforcement or DHR. Moreover, such conversations may violate state and federal law (Code of Alabama 1975 § 13A-6-122 , 18 U.S.C. § 2422, 18 U.S.C. § 2425).

## **TOBACCO USE**

Redeemer 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 Redeemer activities or programs. Redeemer is a tobacco-free facility.

## **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 harassing, 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.

## **FINAL MATTERS**

Policies and procedures are not enough alone to stop the abuse of children. All facility users, volunteers, staff members, and pastors must work together to protect the children whom God our Father has entrusted to us.

Amendments to this policy can only be made by official action of the Elder Board by resolution which should be reported to the membership at the next possible members' meeting.

Redeemer calls on her pastors, staff members, volunteers, and all reasonable adults to exercise common sense for the protection of all children under our care. So, reasonable, temporary provisions, controls, and restrictions above and beyond those laid out here which protect children are encouraged. These would be evaluated for effectiveness and implementation by the Safety Team at the next meeting.

Suggestions for amendments can be submitted to any elder. Suggested amendments should include detailed wording, justification for amendment, and solutions for success.