

Form #7

Guidelines for Children's Ministry Volunteers

Note: We live in an age where sexual misconduct and child abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented policies to help safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working in any ministry with children, including the Sunday School. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

Before You Begin

Six-Month Rule -- All workers must be members or regular attendees of Living Word United Methodist Church for at least six months before volunteering with children.

Completion of Application -- All children's program volunteers must complete and sign an application form.

Release Authorization Form -- All children's program volunteers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

References -- Applicants will be asked to provide three references not in the applicant's immediate family. The church may also contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

Interview -- All children's program volunteers must be interviewed by a church leader to determine their suitability for teaching. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons. Interviews may be over the phone or in person.

Background Check and Social Services Registry -- After gaining the applicant's permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a Missouri family registry check for applicants: this is mandatory for primary positions and optional for secondary positions.

Auto Safety Form -- All children's program volunteers who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines -- All children's program volunteers must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

Guidelines

Two-Person Rule -- Two workers must be present with children at all times. This rule accomplishes two important objectives. First, it reduces the risk of child abuse. Secondly, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. Teams of workers cannot be of the same family unless a third un-related person is a visible and unpredictable presence such as hallway helpers who continually stop in to various rooms.

Corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in Living Word United Methodist Church activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Teachers must consult their supervisors or a pastor if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.

Volunteers must report suspected or observed child abuse to the Childcare Coordinator, Director of Children’s Ministries or any Pastor immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior by other workers must be reported in the same manner.

Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from duty at the discretion of the Director of Children’s Ministries or a Pastor.

I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:

Signature_____ Date_____