



Dear Children's Volunteer,

Welcome to Redeemer Children's Ministry!

We are thrilled to have you come alongside families and serve these precious children. At Redeemer, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Redeemer volunteers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

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

Sincerely,

Carley Smith and Monique Wooten, Nursery  
Allie Arnold and Shannon Foster, Children's Church  
Emma Gaona, Youth  
Clay Wooten, Senior Pastor  
Charlie Gaona, Ruling Elder  
Andy Smith, Ruling Elder

# Redeemer Presbyterian Church

## Policies & Procedures for Children's Ministries

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## Nursery Philosophy of Ministry

The Nursery Ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church exists to serve the body of the church through the care and development of its youngest members. We desire to make each child feel loved and welcomed, each parent/guardian assured of their child's care, and each volunteer protected as they serve.

## Children's Ministry Philosophy of Ministry

Redeemer Kids seeks to come alongside parents and assist in the spiritual growth and development of their children. We want to show children God's big gospel story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration through weekly classes with age appropriate stories and activities. We want children to know and love the Father who created and loves them. We want families to experience the fellowship of being part of a community of believers, and we want to help children learn how their unique gifts can be used by God.

## Youth Philosophy of Ministry

Redeemer Youth strives to cultivate a generation of young adults who are firmly rooted in their faith by nurturing their personal growth and strengthening their relationship with God. Throughout our studies, we will provide the youth with the necessary tools to navigate the challenges of the world God created. We believe that being part of a congregation and building meaningful connections with fellow believers are essential aspects of our spiritual journey.

## Overview of the Redeemer Safety System

Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older to be considered an “adult” volunteer. A volunteer aged 13-17 will be considered a “youth” volunteer. Youth volunteers must volunteer at the same time as two adult volunteers, so the Two Adult Rule can be followed at all times. Youth who wish to volunteer must be active members of the Redeemer Youth program (participation and regular attendance for at least six months). Youth volunteers must present written permission from a parent/guardian before completing the Ministry Safe training and becoming a volunteer.

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Redeemer requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete THREE SAFETY STEPS before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

### STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Redeemer policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a leader of the Redeemer Children’s Ministries and to the Session. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Redeemer staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Redeemer requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe’s Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online at [www.MinistrySafe.com](http://www.MinistrySafe.com)). This training will be renewed every two years.

### STEP TWO: Criminal Background Check

Redeemer requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children’s or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. Individuals who have committed a felony may not serve in any area providing

services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

### 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 agrees to comply with policy requirements.

## Child Safety Policy

### 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.

Oklahoma State law (10A O.S. 1-2-101) requires every person, private citizen or professional, who has reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is a victim of abuse or neglect, to immediately report the matter to the Department of Human Services, at the statewide hotline.

Abuse Hotline: (1-800-522-3511) When in doubt, report.

### REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any **inappropriate behaviors** (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to the Nursery Coordinators (Carley Smith or Monique Wooten), the Children's Church Coordinators (Allie Arnold or Shannon Foster), or Youth Director (Emma Gaona). The Session should also be notified.

If there is suspected **abuse** (physical, emotional, or sexual) the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency should be notified by the observer. Coordinators and Session should then be notified.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a ministry coordinator and the Session. 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, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Ministry Coordinators and the Redeemer Session.

#### ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Redeemer staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Redeemer policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from a position in Children's Ministries – for both volunteers and staff members. Repeated policy violations will be handled by the Ministry Coordinators and the Redeemer Session.

#### REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the Oklahoma Department of Family and Protective Services.

### Safety Committee

#### SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Redeemer will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

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

#### COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

- The Session
- Carley Smith and Monique Wooten, Nursery Coordinators
- Allie Arnold and Shannon Foster, Children's Church Coordinators
- Emma Gaona, Youth Coordinator

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Redeemer policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to Redeemer coordinators regarding safety issues.

## Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

### BUILDING SAFETY

Every Ministry Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during programming serving children. This includes unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers, and children. No child will ever be left unattended in a ministry area or on a playground during regular programming, classes or activities.

### SUPERVISION

Only parents (dropping off children), screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, a ministry coordinator or security team member should be notified immediately.

Two trained, screened adults should supervise children at all times.

Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of children, another volunteer or employee must be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, 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.)

If you need to talk with a child away from the main group, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area within sight of the security team member, or have another leader with you.

After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom has no remaining children.

## Child Safety Measures

### WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

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

<u>Program</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Children</u>
Nursery	2	8
Children's Church	2	18
Youth	2	18

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the appropriate coordinator. Coordinators will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Redeemer policy.

### CHECK-IN/PICK UP

Upon arrival to church or while children are lining up, the parent/guardian is required to fill out a name tag for the child. It should include the child's name, parent/guardian's name, and contact number. A corresponding tag with child's name should stay with the parent/guardian to be used at pick up time. At pick up, the corresponding sticker must be shown for the release of the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their Ministry Coordinator before releasing the child.

## Disciplinary Policies

### DISCIPLINE

It is Redeemer's 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. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. When a child is misbehaving, follow these steps:

1. Go to the child and calmly ask him or her to stop the behavior (most children respond immediately and correct the behavior). Give a warning, remind the child of class expectations, and redirect to a positive behavior.
  - \* When working with younger children, some physical redirection may be necessary: for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child who is hitting another.
2. If the child repeats the action, guide them to a quiet place – separate from the other children – for a short but designated period of time. Stay within sight of others, and avoid being alone (or unseen) with the child. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the separation, and a clear explanation of your expectations (“Terry, you didn’t stop hitting Kelly when I asked you to, so it was necessary for me to separate you from the group.”).
3. After a 3rd time, refer to a staff member. A staff member may inform a parent or guardian, who may be asked to become involved in redirecting misbehavior.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to ministry coordinators.

#### NEVER...

- Never yell at a child.
- Never grab a child.
- Never threaten a child.
- Never hit a child.
- Never confront a parent in front of others.
- Never openly humiliate a child in front of the class.

#### BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in Redeemer ministry programs. At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your Ministry Coordinator. There is no “harmless put-down” where bullying is concerned. Bullying is defined as “seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce (someone perceived as vulnerable)” (Oxford Languages).

1. At the first sign of bullying, pull the child aside and address the issue. Explain that this type of behavior is unacceptable, and that you will be contacting parents and Ministry Coordinators.
2. After programming, the Ministry Coordinator and parent should be communicated with about the issue.

## Restroom Policies

Children should use the single bathroom during programming. An adult should not enter the single bathroom with a child present. If a child uses the restroom and does not return, the volunteer should utilize the lobby security to check on the child (maintaining the two adult policy in the classroom). If the child needs assistance, the parent/guardian should be contacted by the volunteer. This includes any children with special needs.

### NURSERY CHILDREN

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

- Diapering – the volunteer is not authorized to change a child’s diaper. Please contact the parent/guardian to take care of any needs.
- Toilet training – parents should be contacted if the child is in need of the restroom.

## Medication

Do not administer medication of any kind to any child while serving in ministry programs, including ‘over the counter’ drugs.

## One-to-One Interaction with Children

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Redeemer’s Children’s

Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the Redeemer screening process should always be present.

## Social Media

Volunteers should not engage in any online relationships with students that could be perceived as inappropriate. This includes befriending students on social media platforms, sharing personal information or photos, or engaging in any private messaging.

## Physical Contact

Redeemer is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Redeemer has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

- Hugging, 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.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to the Ministry Coordinators and the Redeemer Session.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- 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.

- Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to the Ministry Coordinators and the Redeemer Session.

## Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while supervising children's programming.

## 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.

## Sexually Oriented Conversations/Materials

- 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. If children are asking sexually oriented questions, the volunteer should direct them to ask a parent/guardian as that is not a topic discussed in Children's Ministries.
- Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries at Redeemer are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.
- Staff members and volunteers in Redeemer Children's Ministries 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.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the Ministry Coordinator and the Session concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

## Parental Involvement

### 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 their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Redeemer. 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 the children's programs at Redeemer should connect with the Ministry Coordinator to address concerns or sign up to volunteer and go through the screening process.

## Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to the Ministry Coordinator.

I have received and read a copy of Redeemer 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 Redeemer.

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

I have reviewed the duties described above, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my voluntary service at Redeemer at any time. I also understand that schedules are made a semester at a time, and I will fulfill my scheduled duties if at all possible.

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

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed. I acknowledge receipt of Redeemer policies and procedures manual.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ministry Coordinator’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date