

# Journey Church Family Ministries Policies & Procedures

*Ages Birth through 18 years*

## Summary of Key Points

**1. Screening, Background Checks, & Application:** All Ministry Staff, Serve Team volunteers & childcare workers must complete and pass an application with references, a background check (age 16 and older), and a personal interview with a ministry staff member **before** they may serve or work in any Kids or Student ministry environment, or have any direct interaction with children under 18.

**2. Never Alone.** A minimum of **(2) adults (18 & older)**: will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. A child may never be left alone in any classroom. *We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity.*

**3. Check-in/check-out Procedure:** Every child is checked into our computer check-in system prior to entering a classroom and receives a name tag which must be visible at all times. For children in programming birth thru 5th grade, there is a matching security tag/claim ticket printed and given to their parent/guardian for pick up. The parent/guardian must present their child's security tag in order to sign out the child from our care.

**4. Name Tags:** No one is allowed in the Family Ministry area without a name tag. All Kids, Students, and Serve Team volunteers and childcare workers must wear a clearly visible name tag while participating in any classroom, activity, program, or ministry event.

**5. Room Openings/Closings:** Classrooms are only opened when at least (2) Serve Team adult workers have arrived. No child is ever alone in a classroom, and no worker is ever alone with a child.

**6. Scheduling:** When you are scheduled to serve, please arrive 20 minutes before the service or activity begins. Check yourself in at the check-in station and get your Serve Team name tag. Then report to your classroom, or to your ministry Team Huddle. If you are unable to serve as scheduled, please notify your Ministry Pastor or Director as soon as possible.

**7. Training:** All Serve Team volunteers receive yearly age specific training for their specific ministry area, (Kids Ministry and Student Ministry, etc.), including safety and abuse prevention/reporting procedures, and agree to abide by Journey's Policies and Procedures.

### **8. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse:**

Should you suspect that a child/student under your care is being neglected, or physically or sexually abused, it is important that you contact the Pastor or Director over your ministry age group at the earliest opportune time. A Pastor or Director is a Mandatory Reporter and will take any necessary action.

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## **OVERVIEW**

Our greatest desire is that all who attend Journey Church have a safe, positive experience. We provide age appropriate programming designed to help all kids and students take their next steps with Jesus. We have outlined safeguards that we believe are good for kids, and good for our church. The safety and security of all our kids, students, Serve Team members and church is our highest priority.

Outlined below are global safeguards that serve as a foundation for any ministry trainings, policies, and procedures specific for Journey Kids Ministry and Student Ministry. Anyone who works with children agrees to abide by the policies and procedures outlined within. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect all children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and serve team members from false accusations. In order to protect children and those who serve them, we encourage that serve team members stay above reproach in every situation with a child.

### **Definitions:**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all participants of Journey Church programs under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “adult” includes anyone over the age of 18. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. Workers may include Staff, volunteer Serve Team members, Helpers and Childcare workers. The term “volunteer” or “serve team” means anyone who is unpaid and serving in any capacity which interacts with children.

***It is the policy of Journey Church Colorado, that for all ministry and activities occurring at all Journey Church locations:***

**1. Screening, Background Checks & Application.** All Ministry Staff, Serve Team members and Childcare workers must complete and pass an application with references, an annual background check (*age 18 & older*), and a personal interview with a ministry staff member **before** they may serve or work in any Kids or Youth ministry environment, or have any direct interaction with children under 18.

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Time Frame**

Whenever possible six (6) months minimum involvement with Journey Church is preferred before consideration for any serve team position involving contact with minors at Journey Church. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. The ministry Pastor or Director will be the final approval authority for all Kids or Student Ministry positions.

b) **Written Application**

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All persons (aged 14 and older) seeking to work with children must complete and sign an application supplied by Journey. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, references, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application will be maintained in confidence on file at Journey Church.

## c) **Policy & Procedures**

Along with the application and on an annual basis, our Policies & Procedures need to be reviewed by all serve team members. The serve team member will be required to sign our acknowledgement form that shows they will abide by our Policies & Procedures.

## d) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview will be scheduled with the applicant and ministry Pastor or Director, to discuss his/her suitability for the position which they would like to serve.

## e) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

## f) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for anyone working with children (regardless of position) as defined above. Background checks are kept current and will be updated on a **1 year**, annual basis, for all workers 18 and older.

- A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by our Ministry Pastors & Directors on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children.
- Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

**2. Never Alone.** A minimum of (2) adults will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. A child may never be left alone in any classroom. *We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity.* We have a two-adult room policy (at least 2 adults in a room with any group of kids), that means that no child is ever alone with a worker. The number of workers will follow appropriate child-to-worker age ratios for age specific staffing of all programs.

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TEENAGE WORKERS (ages 14 - 17): Minors may volunteer on a Serve Team, or work providing childcare as long as they are at least 14 years old, have gone through our screening/application process, must be under the supervision of an adult, and must never be left alone with children.

***Kids Team Helpers***, (are minors under the age of 14) who may, at the discretion of Ministry Staff, serve in a classroom that their parent or guardian is serving in. The parent or guardian is then the direct supervisor of that minor, and the Helper does not count towards the required child-to-worker ratios.

THE TWO-ADULT RULE. The purpose of the Two-Adult Rule is to make sure the actions of any one leader are known to at least one other leader and to encourage leaders to support each other in ministry. This fosters a culture of accountability that helps prevent and deter misconduct. It also helps reduce the ability for anyone to make a false accusation. This means that two screened adults are present at every function and in each classroom, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, or youth. It's about accountability. *Example: It is not appropriate for one screened adult to be with two toddlers as there would be no accountability regarding the adult's actions. Similarly, one screened adult should not be alone with a teen volunteer and a very young child because there's no accountability regarding the interactions between the adult and the teen volunteer.*

UNPLANNED SITUATIONS: In the rare occasion that a worker must briefly step out of a classroom for any reason where the child-to-worker ratio cannot be maintained, or the two adult rule would be compromised, doors to the classroom must remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. These unplanned situations are rare and unforeseen, and must be reported immediately to the Ministry Pastor or Director. For any time when there is only one adult present, the group must be in a location that is visible to others with an unobstructed window, open door, etc.

GUIDELINES FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS: Meet only in public, non-private locations where the adult and the child are constantly visible by others at all times. Example: Family check-in area, upper atrium, playground, etc..

**3. Check-in/Check-out Procedure.** At every Journey location, each child is checked into our online system (CCB) prior to entering a classroom, and receives a name tag which must be visible at all times. For children in programming birth thru 5th grade, there is a matching security tag/claim ticket printed and given to their parent/guardian for pick up. The parent/guardian must present their child's security tag in order to sign out the child from our care. *In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present their security tag, the*

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*Ministry Pastor or Director will be contacted. Upon verification of identity with a valid driver's license, the child will be released to the parent/guardian.*

**4. Name Tags.** No one is allowed in the Family Ministry area without a name tag or appropriate badge. All Kids, Students, Serve Team members and Childcare Workers must wear a clearly visible name tag while participating in any classroom, activity, program, or ministry event.

**5. Room Openings/Closings.** Classrooms are only opened once two Serve Team adult members or workers have arrived. No child is ever alone in a classroom, and no worker is ever alone with a child. Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or the door has a side window. Classroom doors should be propped open when children/students are arriving. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room, unless there is an emergency shelter order in place.

**6. Scheduling.** When you are scheduled to serve, please arrive 20 minutes before the service or activity begins. Check yourself in at the check-in station and get your Serve Team name tag. Then report to your classroom, or to your ministry Team Huddle. If you are unable to serve as scheduled, please notify your Ministry Pastor or Director as soon as possible.

**7. Training.** All Serve Team volunteers agree to participate in and receive yearly age specific training for their specific ministry area, (Kids Ministry and Student Ministry). Training may be in person or online depending on specific content. Year training includes safety and abuse prevention/reporting procedures, ministry updates and best practices. All workers agree to abide by the Journey Church Family Ministry Policies and Procedures.

**8. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse.** Should you suspect that a child/student under your care is being neglected, or physically or sexually abused, it is important that you contact the Pastor or Director over your ministry age group at the earliest opportune time. A Pastor or Director is considered a "Mandatory Reporter" and will take any necessary action. As a serve team member, you should not conduct an "interview" with the child or make contact with the parents. This is the responsibility of the Pastor or Director. Any information told to you should be kept confidential. All paid Journey Church Colorado ministry staff for are under obligation as Mandatory Reporters in the State of Colorado.

Your service requires that you agree with the following guidelines to prevent child abuse or false accusations of abuse. Following these guidelines will help protect both Journey Church and you, our valued serve team member, from liability.

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For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- *Physical abuse* – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- *Emotional abuse* – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- *Sexual abuse* – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest and pornography.
- *Neglect* – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter and medical care.

At any time a worker may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported **immediately** to the Ministry Pastor or Director for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Journey Church or during any of our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she will be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse will be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Operations Pastor will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning all incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the

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congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.

6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This will be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

**9. Sick Child Policy.** It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Journey. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

**10. Medications Policy.** It is the policy of Journey not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted **in writing** by parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation ahead of time with the ministry Pastor or Director to develop a plan of action.

**11. Discipline Policy.** It is the policy of Journey Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult immediately with the ministry Pastor or Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

We always want to try to understand why children/youth act inappropriately. Sometimes there are small things we can do to help them adapt to the church environment better. Please use corrective guidance when handling an incident. This includes positive verbal correction and affirmation when the child/youth exhibits appropriate behavior.

**12. Restroom Guidelines.** Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, two (2) workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside, keeping the exterior

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bathroom door propped open. The workers shall wait at the doorway threshold, absent emergency circumstances, then escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary or if a child requires assistance, workers may assist the child, with the bathroom doors and/or stall doors propped open.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside, keeping the bathroom door propped open. The workers shall wait at the doorway threshold, absent emergency circumstances, then escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

## **13. Diaper Changing Policy.**

- Only female volunteers may change a diaper and/or take a child to the restroom (except as listed above for children over the age of 5).
- Please place a “changed” or “checked with care sticker” on any child that has been checked/ changed.
- Check the child’s diaper bag for any diapers or supplies that they may have brought. That ensures that we are using the preferred brands/items with each child.
- Extra diaper changing supplies (diapers, wipes, gloves, stickers) are available next to the changing station and in the cabinets in both the nursery, 2-3 year old classrooms and nursing room..
- For your safety, please use gloves when changing/checking diapers. Please DO NOT leave a child unattended at the changing station.

Diapers may be thrown in the trashcan in the room. For messy and/or smelly diapers, please place the diaper in a closed trash bag to take out.

**14. Accidental Injuries to Children.** In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child’s parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker’s supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.
4. All injuries should have an injury report written up about the incident. This report should be kept electronically in the CCB Process System called - Children’s Injury Reports.



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## 15. EMERGENCY SAFETY PROCEDURES

**\*EVACUATION PLAN:** All children and youth will be escorted out the nearest available exterior door. Maps are located in each room highlighting fire/emergency exit pathways. As an example, elementary classrooms will exit out the doors beside or in the student room or the lower entrance areas. Preschool, nursery and special needs classrooms and hallways shall exit out the playground doors, rear east side door or lower entrance areas.

The room roster is to be taken with each group by a serve team member. One serve team member from each room can take the kids from their class and the other serve team member can stop by the preschool area to help take any infants & crawlers outside.

*Please stay outside with all your children until you're told to return back in the building or until children are released to their parents.*

**\*LOCKDOWN:** If we're ever in a lockdown situation, lock the door in your room, turn off the lights, and stay away from the windows, and keep all children out of sight from the door windows.