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Team Resource Guide

**“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.” John 15:5 (HCSB)**

*A Successful Children’s Ministry Must Be:*

**Child Centered.** God loves every child, and therefore we accept them and love them, just the way they are. Children who need special attention are lovingly welcomed. Our environments are kid-friendly, engaging, and educational. Our volunteers strive to understand a child’s perspective and to make the message of Christianity relevant to the life of a child. We have fun, but it is fun with a *purpose!* Therefore, our teaching is creative and engaging and connects with the world of kids in order to help them connect with God.

*“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”* 1 Corinthians 9:22

**Highly Relational.** We strive to be relational, not just informational. While we creatively teach important spiritual truths to our children, we understand that building *relationships* with children is the most effective tool.  Throughout all of our programs, we seek to connect children with loving adults who know and love Jesus, understanding that this will be more effective than any program, product, or lesson ever will be.

“*As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.”* Luke 24:15

**Gospel Focused.** We believe that children are important and matter to God. Not only can children come to faith in Jesus Christ, but God commands *adults* to come to Him with the simple faith of a child. We present the Good News of salvation through Jesus often and clearly, providing opportunities for children to invite Him into their lives as their Savior and Friend. If resources lack the Gospel message, we will be sure to include it ourselves, for we believe that without saving faith in Christ, no other Bible lesson truly is applicable or has eternal consequence.

*“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”* Matthew 19:14

**Discipleship Driven.** We recognize that Jesus gave one primary command when He returned to heaven: *Go and make disciples*. However, we believe that making disciples is not something that happens haphazardly in the course of church attendance. It should be approached with intentionality and strategy and with a focus on the individual. After accepting the gospel, children need a solid Biblical foundation laid that will enable them to grow in wisdom and knowledge and character in a manner that will last a lifetime. Empowering parents and others to intentionally disciple children is a critical component of developing lifelong devoted followers of Jesus.

“*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28:19-20

**Our Vision**

... is to teach kids the gospel in a way that is fun, exciting and encouraging. We want to equip them with the tools necessary to lead a life free from the entanglements of sin and help them to grow spiritually. We aspire to teach them the importance of hiding God's word in their hearts and the blessings that come from applying that in their own lives.

Jesus gave one primary command when He returned to heaven: *Go and make disciples* (Matthew 28:19-20). However, we believe making disciples should be intentional, strategic and focused on individuals, not something that happens haphazardly by church attendance.  Children need a solid biblical foundation enabling them to grow in wisdom and knowledge in a manner that will last a lifetime.

In our large group/small group model of children’s ministry, kids experience the Bible in a large group setting, then gather in small groups to connect and apply truth to their lives. Energy created by a large group brings excitement to kids’ teaching time and worship like no classroom can. Small group time creates a sense of community for kids whose spiritual growth depends on caring people building relationships with them. Leaders walk kids through “So what?” and “What now?’ questions and experiences that help them see how God’s Word applies to their lives.

We strive to be relational, not just informational. While we creatively teach spiritual truths, we understand that building relationships with children is the most effective tool. All our programs connect children with loving adults who know and love Jesus. This is more effective than any program, product or lesson ever will be. Empowering parents and others to intentionally disciple children is a critical component of developing lifelong, devoted followers of Jesus.

Dear Treehouse Leaders,

It is with great delight that we bring to you this new Ministry Handbook. Our hope and prayer is that it will both inform you and challenge you as we continue on this journey of ministry  together. Inside you will find many key pieces of information that will make your time successful. You will find contact information, tips on leading a child to Christ, rules, policies and much, much more. Please read this valuable resource so that we may strive to stand united in this spiritual journey together.

Please know that my door is always open to you. Feel free to call and make an appointment to meet with me any time.

Thank you so much for taking the time and energy to commit to serving the kids of our church and community. It is a blessing to serve with such passionate people who are obedient to the Lord’s call on their lives.

Serving HIS Kids with You,

Doug Olson, Pastor of Families with Children

**Contact Information**

Doug Olson, Pastor to Families with Children

Living Hope Church

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**Volunteer Policies**

**Commitment**

**Commitment Form**

Strong commitment is essential for anyone who volunteers with our kids. To effectively show them the love of Christ and to have a chance to make an impact on their lives, we feel that our  volunteers should make a commitment to the kids and our ministry. Therefore, we ask that all volunteers sign a one-year commitment form saying that you will agree with and abide by our policies and stick with our kids in ministry for the next year, at which time you can feel free to re-evaluate whether or not you would like to continue ministering with our nursery, preschool and elementary-age kids.  Please fill out the commitment form in the back of this handbook and return it to Doug as soon as possible.

**Schedules**

Ministry wide schedules are made 3-6 months at a time. We send out the schedules ahead of the start of the schedule for your convenience. Each week on Tuesday you will get an invitation to the following Sunday if you are scheduled to serve. Please respond to the invitation promptly so we know you plan on being with us! Your lesson is attached to the invitation at the very bottom if you are Nursery or Preschool. Elementary lessons are placed on the following website Monday or Tuesday the week you serve www.mytreehousekids.com/itlessons

**Calling a substitute procedure**

In the event that an emergency should arise and you are unable to serve, you should follow these instructions:

Attempt to replace yourself. Make phone calls to approved and background-checked volunteers in your program group and try to find someone to fill in your spot. (A color coded by group volunteer sub list is attached to your e-mail reminder.) Our groups are Welcome Team, Safety Team, Nursery, Preschool Large Group Leaders, Preschool Small Group Leaders, Elementary Large Group Leaders, Preschool Small Group Leaders. After you have found a sub please let Pastor Doug or Luann know this change will be happening.

If you are unable to find someone, call Pastor Doug or Luann Lee as soon as you possibly can. If you know you are not going to be able to serve during your scheduled time please make every effort to let us know with enough time so we can fill your spot. We can give you suggestions of people to call or assist you in finding a sub.

**On Boarding Process – new volunteers**

All new volunteers have a process that we follow through. Adult process is different than those who are under 18.

All adults (over 18 year) will submit to a National Background Check and Sex Offender Registry Search. We utilize a service which provides real time local background checks as well.

**Adults**

-interview to find interest and desire to serve

-fill out application digitally through Protect My Ministry

-background check

-child safety training

-reference check to previous ministry served or character references

-interview – when and where they would like to serve, make sure passion and desire for kids remain high

-training/orientation

-mentor/coach placement

**Teens**

-interview to find interest and desire to serve

-fill out teen application (paper form)

-parent agreement / consent signature

-reference check previous ministry or character references

-interview

-teen orientation and training

-placed with adult volunteer

\*Note: Because of the sensitive material in the Child Safety Training Course, we will not be asking any child under 15 to take the course. If they are 16-18 years old, we will seek the parents’ written approval before we send the link for the training. We will alert teens in orientation to possible threats and advise them to not hesitate to let an adult volunteer know if they see or hear something that makes them uncomfortable or that is just not right.

**Classroom Ratios**

There should always be 2 adults in each classroom. Even in the case of one child a volunteer should never be alone with a child.

Married couples should never serve alone in the same space. If a husband and wife would like to serve together a 3rd unrelated volunteer will be placed with the couple. This is an accountability and transparency safeguard that will protect our husband-and-wife team as well as our church leadership.

Teens can and should be serving alongside our qualified, background checked, and safety trained adult leaders. Teens can serve in any program. Teens cannot serve with only teens. At least one adult must be present at all times when a teen is serving. Teens serving where only one adult is present must be unrelated to the adult. In some instances the whole family serves and this would include teams that have parent and their teen kids or a parent and their teen kids in conjunction with other adults assigned in that same program.

A rule of thumb to guide our leader to child ratio:

Nursery: 1 leader to 3 children (2 adults serve up to 6 kids)

Preschool: 2yrs-K, 1 leader to 6 child (2 adults serve up to 12 kids)

Elementary: 1st-5th, 1 leader to 8 children (2 adults serve up to 16kids)

**Restroom Procedures**

**Elementary children will walk to restroom unassisted. If a child doesn’t know where the restroom is, send another capable child to show them.**

Don’t ask the children if they need to use the restroom. Let them initiate.

If a young child needs assistance getting to the restroom you may walk them to the restroom and wait outside the door while they go in one child at a time.

Never take a child into the restroom alone.

Do not walk kids to the restroom alone. Make sure either the Welcome team or Safety Team is present when walking a child to the restroom. Never go into the restroom alone to assist the child. If a child calls for help, have the Welcome team member or Safety Team member go into the restroom to assist you. Only go into the restroom if you 1) were called by a child to help and 2) when you have another adult in the restroom to assist.

The 2 and 3-year-old classrooms have an individual restroom in the middle between the two rooms. If a 2 or 3-year-old needs help, make sure the door is open and that both adult volunteers are present. If there is only one volunteer, you will need to get another adult volunteer from the adjoining classroom.

Volunteers are not permitted to help with wiping after a bowel movement with kids who are in underwear. If kids have an accident or need help wiping, parents must be paged.

Make sure kids wash hands after each time they use the restroom.

If a child makes a mess in the restroom, alert the Safety Team or Welcome Desk

after the child is finished.

**Diapering Procedures**

Diapers must be changed on changing tables only.

Diapers are changed by lead female nursery workers only. Teens and males are not allowed to change diapers.

Never leave a child unattended on the changing table or turn away from a child while they are on the table.

An additional volunteer must be present at the time of diaper change.

Place a new liner on the changing table each time you change a diaper.

Wear a new pair of disposable gloves with each diaper change.

Dispose of the dirty diaper in the provided diaper pail or trash can.

Disinfect the changing table after each diaper change.

Wash your hands after each diaper change.

Do not administer any creams or ointments. If a child needs cream or ointment, parents can be paged to administer it if necessary.

If a parent needs to be paged for diapering help please alert the Welcome Team.

Be aware that some parents choose to change their child’s diaper. Have Welcome desk page the parent if child needs to be changed.

**Policy Guiding Teen Volunteers**

**We believe strongly that teens serve in Treehouse Kids Ministry. Often times these teens are a direct product of our ministry and are strong proponents of what God has called us to do as we disciple kids. We encourage teens to serve and be discipled in our ministry.**

When placing teens in service they will always be placed with one or more of our seasoned leaders who can mentor, coach and guide the teens. We place teens in positions that they may have the best success in their ministry to kids.

Teens will be vetted differently than adult volunteers. We will not background check teens. Instead, we begin with a conversation with our Youth Ministry Team to see about ministry fit, spiritual growth, stability in handling different situations. We ask teens to fill out an application that their parents must agree to them serving and attest to the information the teen supplied on the application. The teens provide references that we call and verify.

Our belief is that kids younger than 15 should not take the Child Safety Training. The subject matter in the training is sensitive and could be the first introduction to some of the material. While we feel some sensitivity to abuse is wise, full exposure at this age may be more harmful than good. We will provide some information to this age group so that they can alert a volunteer, the assistant, or Children’s pastor when they see things that make them uncomfortable or that are just not right.

For teens older than 15 but under 18 we will seek written parental approval before sending the link for the Child Safety Training Course.

**Conflict Resolution and Remediation Procedure**

**Each person, and situation, is different. Generally, following the standards set forth in Matthew 18:15-17 will resolve most conflicts and the breaking of rules, procedures and policies. We believe personal conversation will be the most effective means of resolution. When a resolution is not initially reached, we will enact the following process to try to reach resolution.**

**Level One Process (operation rules, procedures and policies)**

Step 1: Have a conversation with person in question. We will make every effort to be personally relatable. Questions like: How is life? How’s your walk with Jesus? How’s your ministry to kids? Are there any problems I can help with? will lead to a discussion that will lead to a best practice option for step 2.  
  
Step 2: Remind them of the rules or policy they have not been following in a way that is not condescending. It may be part of the conversation in step 1.  
  
If breaking the rule puts them or us in a place where a change needs to be made, we ask them to try a new position. Sometimes rules are broken because the person is in the wrong position.  
  
Step 3: Ask how I can help them and pray for them.  
  
Repeat offense:  
Step 1: Approach the volunteer with the step one questions.  
  
Step 2: Tell them you noticed the same rules are not being followed. Ask if a break from serving is needed to see if we have the wrong ministry fit. Give them the policy in writing and show them the signed commitment form where they agreed to follow the policy.  
  
If the rules continue to be broken, ask the volunteer to step away from ministry for a time.  
  
Of course, we can speed up or slow down this process depending on the person’s attitude, the severity of the offense, or the impact the rule breaking has on children, other volunteers, or the life of the ministry as a whole.

**Level Two Process (child safety concerns, ministry division, blatant disregard for leadership**)

Step 1: Have a conversation with person in question. We will make every effort to be personally relatable. Questions like: How is life? How’s your walk with Jesus? How’s your ministry to kids? Are there any problems I can help with?

Step 2: Tell the person what has been reported or observed (rules, policies or procedures broken). Determine heart condition of offender. Was there remorse? What was the offense? Was a child harmed? Were other ministry volunteers affected? (These questions help determine fit for ministry)

Step 3: Ask volunteer to take one or more Sundays off to review, refresh and restore. The number of Sundays or time off is determined by A) what the offense was B) what the person’s heart condition tells us about ministry fit at this time.

**Zero tolerance issues (including child harm short of abuse and harassment), given all known facts and at the discretion of the Children’s Pastor, the volunteer in question will be asked to step away from ministry immediately.**

**In cases of known abuse all volunteers are mandated reporters according to federal law. You must report the incident and known facts to the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. See next sections for specifics on Child Abuse.**

**Steps to restoration of ministry for person who is asked to step away from ministry.**

At the discretion of the ministry leader and the volunteer in question, the following happens before reinstatement.

1) Two leaders will interview volunteer. We will be measuring their remorsefulness, the understanding of the severity of not following rules, procedures or policies, their heart condition, and overall fit for kids’ ministry. We will also ask if the volunteer is ready to sign our commitment form, to commit to serving for a season and following all rules, procedures and policies.

If we find that there is a good ministry fit, they will be asked to re-enter through our on-boarding process via Protect My Ministry. If we all agree there is not a good fit, we will work with the volunteer to find an appropriate place to serve and be discipled in the church.

**Child Abuse and Reporting Policy**

Living Hope Church supports and maintains an environment free of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect include physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment.

It is against the law for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Living Hope Church will not condone nor tolerate:

* Infliction of bodily injury upon any child or physically abusive behavior towards a child.
* Physical neglect of children, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to church activities.
* Emotional mistreatment of children, including verbal abuse and or verbal remarks.

**Definitions of Child Abuse**

*Defined by The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse*

* **Physical Abuse**

Nonaccidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage, or death.

* **Neglect**

The failure to provide a child with basic needs, including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.

* **Sexual Abuse**

The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person, as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the older person, out of a need for power, or for economic reasons.

Living Hope Church is committed to reporting any suspected abuse of children whether the suspected abuse happened on our campus, at a church function or separate from church activities all together. We will report all suspected abuse.

The reporting of the abuse will be the responsibility of the party witnessing the suspected abuse.

We will follow the Ohio State Department of Job and Family Services Guidelines.

At first notice of questionable behavior, the witness will contact the Children’s Pastor or Children’s Assistant. If there are questions whether the behavior is abusive or not we may ask clarity questions of the witness only not the child or the offender. If it is still a question that abuse may be occurring the witness will be asked to report the incident(s). Do not discuss issue or questionable behavior with anyone other than the person you reported it to.

In any case do not investigate or question the offender or the child. Do not discuss the situation with anyone. This is the job of the Child Protective Services and may harm their investigation if we step in with questions and others opinions.

At any sign of actual abuse (see the above definitions), the witness is to follow OSD Job and Family Services Guidelines for reporting before reporting to any Church staff member. After reporting to JFS advise the Children’s Pastor or Senior Pastor that a report has been made. You may be asked questions to help clarify the situation that led to the report.

**Report Child Abuse and Neglect 855 O-H-CHILD**

Ohioans who suspect child abuse or neglect now only need to remember one phone number.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services has launched 855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453), an automated telephone directory that will link callers directly to a child welfare or law enforcement office in their county.  Reports can be anonymous.

*Please Note: All of the below information is not needed to make a report. If you are not sure you have enough information to report, always err on the safety of the child. Children Services screens all reports to determine if there is enough information to investigate.*

**What information is helpful when making a report?**

1. The name and address of the child you suspect is being abused or neglected;
2. The age of the child;
3. The name and address of the parents or caretakers;
4. The name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child and the address if available;
5. The reason you suspect the child is being abused and neglected;
6. Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation; and
7. You have the option of giving your name or reporting anonymously. Giving your name can help the investigator clarify information. The agency will not give your name to the person suspected of abusing the child.

**What happens after a report is made?**

In Ohio, after a report is made,

1. A child protective services investigator will interview the child, family members and others as deemed appropriate.
2. The investigator determines if the child is being abused or is at risk for abuse.
3. The case may be referred to local social service agencies, or to juvenile, family or criminal court.

**What is a mandated reporter?**

A mandated reporter is someone required by law to report if they suspect or know that child abuse if occurring. A list of mandated reporters for Ohio includes:

* Attorneys
* Audiologists
* Child Care Workers
* Children Services Personnel
* Clergy
* Coroners
* Day Care Personnel
* Dentists
* Foster Parents
* Nurses
* Physicians including hospital Interns and Residents
* Podiatrists
* Psychiatrists
* School Authorities, Employees and Teachers
* Social Workers
* Speech Pathologists
* Animal Control Officers/Agents

**Advancement/Promotion Strategy**

The following policy will help to make sure a child is where they need to be placed.

Nursery 1 for infants will be 0-14 months or walking.

Toddlers will move from Nursery 1 to Nursery 2 when they turn 14 months or are walking.

Older kids move to the next class only on the **2nd Sunday in June** each year. Please do not move any children to the next class outside of these dates:

Nursery 2 is for 14 months until 2-year-old birthday before May 31.

A  2-year-old’s birthday must be before May 31 for June promotion.

A 3-year-old’s birthday must be before May 31 for June promotion.

A 4-year-old’s birthday must be before May 31 for June promotion.

Kids remain in the 4-year-old room until their 5th birthday.

A 5-year-old’s birthday must be before May 31 for June promotion unless the 5th birthday falls between May 31 and August 1 (public school cut-off for Kindergarten).

**\*All elementary** kids are in a Large Group/Small group setting and will be in one large room.  We create small groups based on grade.

**Check-in and Check-out Procedures**

**Our Child safe policy for all environments where children are in the care of the Treehouse Kids Ministry is that no one enters these Child Safe areas without a name tag printed through Breeze CHMS. This allows us to know who is with the children at all times. The tag is one of 3 types. A child tag, a parent pick-up or a leader tag.**

**Check-in Procedure**

-Check in each person in your family who will be attending or serving in Treehouse Kids Ministry

-receive name tags / parent tag at print station

-place name tags on the shirt of kids 3yrs old and older and on the back of Nursery and 2s.

-Parents of children younger than 1st grade are asked to take their children to the restroom before dropping off in classroom.

-All volunteers need to check-in and place a name tag on themselves

-parent name tags can be torn in half so each parent has one

**Check-out Procedure**

-only parents may receive their child at dismissal. Your middle school and high school kids will be sent back to you to get your kids from Treehouse Kids Ministry.

-Have your parent pick-up tag ready.

-Pick-up elementary kids before picking up preschool kids. There is limited space in the elementary pick-up area.

-Please be prompt (on time) and brief (keep conversations to a minimum) in picking your children up. There is often an influx of second service kids at the same time as pick-up. Consistent flow is the key to having a smooth transition.

-Your parent tag can be torn in half in order for one parent to pick-up nursery kids and one to pick-up preschool/elementary.

-You will be asked to show your parent tag to enter the child safe area your child is in. Once at your child’s class you will be asked to show your tag to receive your child.

**Keeping Kid Safe Areas Kid Safe**

Our Kids Safe Areas are the nurseries, classrooms, hallway leading to preschool and elementary rooms, and the restrooms located in Treehouse Kids Ministry.

In order to keep these areas safe we will allow only Kids and on duty volunteers in these spaces when kids are present.

If a parent would like to check on their child the Welcome team or Safety team can escort the parent with pick-up tag to the classroom door and then escort them out.

Volunteers who are not serving are to respect the safe space and not enter these areas unescorted.

Under no circumstance is anyone allowed in these spaces unless they have a name tag or parent pick-up tag.

Elders and Pastors are allowed to enter these spaces if their name tag designating their position is worn.

**Volunteer Arrival Procedures**

**Sunday Morning:**

All Treehouse Kids Ministry team members should arrive 20 minutes before services start. Sample target times: 1st service 8:55 am, 2nd service 10:25 am

**Adventure Kids**

Be in the Kids Worship room no later than 6:00 pm to greet children. We understand the constraints of working, dinner and family. We ask that you make a valiant effort in this area.

**Treehouse Kids Nursery Caring Checklist**

Use this checklist to get ready for kids to arrive.

**For the Nursery Provider**

* Check in and print a name tag for yourself so the parents know who you are.
* Wash hands before starting your shift.
* Greet parents with a smile and get any needed information.
* Ask if the child will be staying for both services.
* Please relay to the next nursery crew information about any child who will be staying.
* The schedule for the morning is on the bulletin board. Please try to minister to the children using the lesson provided.
* In the winter, if you would like to bring in slippers to wear in the nursery, this would help keep the floors clean for the children crawling around.

**Check In**

* Each child needs to check in at the Welcome Center. Three tags will print out. Put one nametag on the back of the child and one nametag on the diaper bag. The parent will keep the claim ticket with the child’s ID number on it to present to the volunteer when picking up their child. Please be sure to match the claim ticket ID number with the child’s ID number before giving the child to their Parent/Guardian at the end of the service.
* Parents may also pick up a pager from the Welcome Attendant in case a need arises.
* Remember to look on the name tag for any allergies.
* As parents are dropping their child off, please ask if there are any special instructions or needs for the child (bottle, diaper change, binkie, etc.).
* If a parent chooses to change the child’s diaper, please let them know we have changing tables in each of the bathrooms. This will mean that only volunteers will be in the nursery for security reasons.
* When the child is picked up, please have the information sticker filled out to give to the parent or to put on the diaper bag to show how the child was cared for that morning.

**Sanitizing Toys**

Parents want to see that your rooms are clean and organized. This sends the message that their kids are your priority. The nursery and toddler rooms are sanitized weekly.

* If a child has a toy in their mouth, please put that toy in the sink to be washed and sanitized.
* Use disinfecting wipes to sanitize surfaces such as diaper-changing tables after each changed diaper.
* Wipe down bouncy seats, exersausers, and high chairs if used.
* Dirty burp cloths, blankets, etc., can be placed in the container on the counter in the nursery room. They will be washed for the following week.

**Snacks**

* At this time we are not providing snacks in any age group.

**Ministry**

Your church nursery ministry is never just babysitting—it’s a foundational time for kids to learn about God. Before Sunday, take time to prepare for the lesson.

* Read the curriculum, and make notes of what you need to do to prepare.  All supplies will be in the room for each lesson.
* Pray for each child to soak up God’s love.
* Pray for God to transform your heart as you serve his children.
* Use a variety of teaching methods so kids get to actively explore.
* Think of ways you can informally remind kids of the lesson through play.
* There’s a music DVD and player in each room so kids can spend time in Praise and Worship.

**Preschool and Elementary Caring Checklist**

Each child needs to check in at the Welcome Center. Two tags will print out. Have the child put the nametag on the front of the shirt. The parent will keep the claim ticket with the child’s ID number on it to present to the volunteer when picking up the child. Please be sure to match the claim ticket ID number with the child’s ID number before giving the child to their Parent/Guardian at the end of the service.

**Building Relationships in Your Small Group**

1. Attend regularly - kids can’t get to know you if you are not here. Consistency is very important to the relational growth of your group and spiritual growth of kids. When you must be absent, tell them in advance when you will be gone and who will be replacing you.
2. Get on their level.

* Maintain eye contact.
* Repeat back what they say to you.
* Ask them about themselves and then follow up on what they tell you ( ie., “How did your soccer game go?” or “How was your recital?”).
* Praise accomplishments, commiserate difficulties, and celebrate together.

1. Initiate contact outside the church setting.

* Birthday cards, cards of encouragement; follow up with kids who you know are struggling with something.
* Give them a call.

1. Develop team identifiers, such as a name for your small group or a secret handshake.

**Some suggestions for fostering relationships with kids**

1. Pray for all your children, by name, every week. If you have a really challenging child who is not responding to intervention, bring the situation to the attention of Pastor Doug.
2. Enthusiasm - If they see you enthused and excited about the lesson, it will help them feel that way, too.
3. Redirection - “I’m so happy you have a new kitty, Susie, and I would love to talk about that with you after we’re done discussing this.”
4. Separate - If you notice that children behave more intensely with certain children, feel free to physically separate them if necessary.
5. Appropriate physical touch - High fives, hand bumps and side hugs can all be used to establish rapport and further develop relationships. Placing an open hand on the child’s back can very gently and discreetly redirect a child in movement.
6. Talk to each other - We have incredibly gifted, talented leaders with years of experience. We'll come up with something.
7. Ask parents to partner with you - If you have a recurring situation that will not resolve, please discuss the situation with Pastor Doug prior to contacting the parents.

**Sharing the Gospel in a Kid-Friendly Way**

“God knows everything, sees everyone and can do anything. He loves us very much and wants us to be friends with Him. When we do wrong things and get in trouble, this is called sin.  When we do bad stuff, it makes God sad. Because of our sin, we wouldn’t be able to get into heaven by ourselves.  But God knows we would never be able to fix it on our own, so He has a plan. Because He loves us so much, Jesus agreed to be in trouble for our wrong stuff. He even had to die for our sins by hanging on a cross, even though He never did anything wrong. But He didn’t stay dead. We can choose to live God’s way and be Jesus’ forever friend and ask Him to help us do right things.”

**It’s as easy as ABC**

A- Admit: We admit that we do bad things (sin).

B - Believe: We believe that Jesus died on the cross for us.

C - Choose: We can choose to be Jesus’ forever friend and make Him the leader of our life.

**Sharing Your Story**

Every week you will be sharing a little of your story, depending on the lesson. Most journeys consist of three main components:

Your life before Jesus Christ.

How you came to know Jesus Christ.

Your life since you became a follower of Jesus Christ.

* Be concrete. Children are very literal thinkers. Avoid abstract phrases such as “I accepted Jesus into my heart.” Their first reaction will likely be, “Didn’t that hurt?” or “How did He fit in there?” Try instead something like, “I chose to live God’s way and follow Jesus.”
* Elaborate on exactly what that means to you, such as treating people kindly, or not telling lies.
* Avoid graphic descriptions of your sinful past. Focus on decisions you make today because knowing Jesus has changed you.
* Recognize that children in the same small group may be on different developmental levels. Be prepared for questions and keep your answers simple.
* Don’t be afraid to admit what you don’t know. Children appreciate honesty.

**You are an Example**

Everything you do - not just on Sundays – impacts the effectiveness of your ministry. Your lifestyle, your recreational choices, the language you use, the priorities children see you set, all affect your relationships in Treehouse Kids Ministry. We are role models and these children are looking to us to learn how Christian men and women behave and choose to live their lives.

*“And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good deeds of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.”* Titus 2:7 (NLT)

**Continuing Enrichment**

In order to remain effective in our roles, we must nurture our own spiritual development. Regular service attendance is a requirement of all Treehouse volunteers. Participation in a small group, attendance at seminars and workshops as available and applicable to your spiritual growth, and a dynamic prayer life can all help you grow in your walk with God. We can not teach from an empty vessel.

**Birthday Cards /Postcards of encouragement**

We would like to encourage you to send birthday cards and postcards to the kids in your class.  We will provide the cards, postcards and postage. Please add a personal note and return to the welcome desk.

**Tornado / Fire Drill Procedures / Fire Alarm**

**Fire Drill/ Alarm:** Line children up at door. Count every child. If every child is accounted for, you need to follow exit strategy maps for FIRE located near door in each room. Nursery will utilize evacuation cribs to transport children. As you walk to the designated area near the garage on the southwest corner of the property. Keep children in line and with your group. Do not let children go with parents or older siblings. Once at the garage count the children in your group to make sure you have everyone. The children’s pastor, children’s assistant or a welcome team member will check your number and names against the attendance roster. Once all children who are in attendance are accounted for the Children’s Pastor will begin releasing to the parents using parent pick-up tags. If it is a fire drill the same procedure takes place. The children will not be released to parents. Once all clear has been given we will enter building and classroom where parents pick-up as normal.

**Children will remain with Treehouse Kids Ministry until all children are accounted for before being released to their parents by the Children’s Pastor using parent pick-up tags.**

**Severe Weather**

**Tornado Warning**

Nursery, Chipmunks and Bunnies will utilize the boys and girls bathrooms in the Treehouse wing. i.e., Nursery will use girls bathroom, Chipmunks and Bunnies will use boys bathroom. Nursery it is advised you place kids in the evacuation cribs to exit your space. Chipmunks and Bunnies please utilize looped ropes.

Deer and Racocons will utilize the exit hallway between the Children’s Pastors office and the Kids Worship room. Kneel on the floor with head into the wall.

Elementary will use the 4th/5th grade small group room with kids lining the walls kneeling with heads into the wall.

No child is to be released to parents or older siblings until an all clear has been given by the Weather Service or Hancock County Emergency Services and every child has been accounted for. Release will be through the Children’s Pastor using parent pick-up tags.

**Tornado Watch/ Thunderstorm Warning**

We will be closely monitoring the Weather Service and Hancock County Emergency Services for developing conditions. Keep kids calm and away from windows. Nursery and Chipmunks may use the activity room during these times. Other rooms your class is the safest place. Keep kids calm and away from the windows. Utilize distraction by reading a story in a circle facing away from widow.

**Lost and Found**

All items left in any Treehouse area or left at an event will be turned in to the main church lost and found located outside the Youth room.

**Wellness Policy**

**Findlay E-Free Treehouse Ministry Wellness Policy:**

For the protection of all, children should not attend if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

* Fever in the last 24 hours
* Vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours
* Runny nose (regardless of color)
* Any unexplained rash
* Pink eye (red eyes or eye discharge)
* Persistent cough
* Common cold or flu (onset through one week)
* Lice (including the presence of eggs or nits)

1. We will ask parents to remove their child from class if we suspect a contagious illness and do not have a note from a physician stating otherwise.
2. A child who complains of not feeling well needs to remain with the parent, even if no symptoms are present yet.
3. We cannot administer medication. If a child requires medication during the service, we ask that the parent administers it.
4. If a child has chronic or seasonal allergies which would lead to clear nasal drainage, irritated reddened eyes and chronic cough please let the Welcome Attendant know so it can be noted on the nametag and the child is not excluded from participating in class.
5. Parents should designate on the registration form if the child has any allergies so they can be printed on the child’s check-in badge.

**Discipline / Behavior Management**

**Ministry-Wide Rules**

First time obedience is expected.

Treat each other kindly and with respect.

Use our listening ears.

Keep our hands and feet to ourselves.

**Discipline Policy:**

1. A verbal warning is given from an adult.
2. The child is removed from the situation.
3. If there is still a problem, the child is separated from the rest of the kids and parents will be brought in from the service.
4. When the child returns to Treehouse Kids Ministry, a parent or guardian may be required to stay with them for a designated number of services (on Sunday mornings).

**We strive to bring about discipline by committing to these things:**

1. We will be aware of the children’s behavior and make appropriate corrections as applicable.
2. We will be consistent.
3. We will be firm about not allowing exceptions to behavioral expectations and avoid allowing a child to behave inappropriately “just this once.”
4. We will praise appropriate behavior regularly. This is the single most effective behavioral reinforcement we possess.
5. When you note inappropriate behavior, immediately make eye contact, state the behavior and give a gentle reminder of our expectation. This works most of the time.
6. Continued misbehavior will require a warning of the consequence. Move closer to the child (or have him move to you.) Be very specific about the expectation of first time obedience and the appropriate behavior. Remind the child that you have already discussed this. A possible consequence could be moving him away from the friend sitting nearby.
7. If the child still does not comply and creates a disruption, removal from the group may be necessary, to give an opportunity to “think over” decisions.
8. Recognize when the child returns and encourage a restored relationship with you and the group. Let him know you know he wants to make the right decision and remind him that you are there to help him learn how. Remind him also that we forgive for free!

**Communicating with Parents**

1. Introduce yourself. As time allows, share your story as to how you came to realize that working with children is your gift and why you serve in the Treehouse Kids Ministry.
2. Approach the parent for conversation at church functions.
3. Maintaining this relationship eases difficult conversations if it becomes necessary to involve a child’s parents. When you discuss a behavioral issue with a parent, always begin this conversation with a positive point about the child, something you really like about her. Then lead into the issue. An example of presenting an issue, “I noticed she really struggled with concentrating this morning. Have you noticed this also? If so, do you have any suggestions for how I can help with this? Is there something specific I can pray for?”
4. Remember that we minister not just to the child but to the whole family.

**STANDARDS of EXCELLENCE**

**We expect all leaders to:**

1. **BE A CHRISTIAN.** The ultimate goal of our Children’s Ministry is to lead kids to Christ, and then help them grow in their Christian life. Therefore, our volunteers should have a personal relationship with Christ themselves! If you are unsure about where you stand in your relationship with God, do not hesitate to talk to one of the pastors here at Findlay E-Free. We would be delighted to open God’s Word and share with you how you can know for sure that you are saved and a child of God!

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

1. **BE REGULAR** in church attendance and involvement, not only at Children’s Ministry functions, but also at the regular worship services and other church events.

**Hebrew 10:25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1. **BE ENCOURAGING IN SPEECH.**  Our words should be encouraging, uplifting and positive. There should be no insults, cut-downs, gossip, slander or any talk where someone may be hurt, especially in the presence of children. Humor should reflect a walk with God.

**Colossians 4:6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

**1 Peter 4:11** If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

**Ephesians 5:4** Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

**Matthew 12:36** But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

1. **BE AN EXAMPLE IN CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.**  Because workers in our Children’s Ministry should be examples and a positive influence on the children they minister to. In your personal life, you should be committed to Bible study, prayer, and Christ-like living.

**Titus 2:6-7** Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set an example for them by doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1. **BE RESPONSIBLE IN LEADERSHIP.**  This involves attending meetings and training, or communicating when you’re unavailable. This includes not planning events or outings without the knowledge and clearance of the Children’s Director. Give respect to church procedures by following them.
   1. **Peter 2:17** Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers.
2. **BE FAITHFUL IN COMMITMENTS MADE.**  When you give your word, keep it. If you say you will do something, or be somewhere, follow through on it. If something happens where you can’t, then communicate so those affected can take necessary action.

**1 Corinthians 4:2** Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

**Proverbs 28:20** A faithful [volunteer] will be richly blessed.

1. **BE PURE IN RELATIONSHIPS.** No teacher or volunteer is to be alone with one child, especially in a restroom or outside of a program. ALWAYS have a woman assist girls in the restroom or in changing them. This is for your own protection as well as the church's, and especially for the children. Men should never be alone with one girl in a room. When with teenage girls, men should always leave the door open and sit in view of the doorway. This is not an issue of trust as much as it is common sense and respect for our young women. We are not only to avoid sin, but even the appearance of sin. Men are never to give a girl a ride home without another male present. Hug pre-teen girls and older from the side.

**1 Timothy 5:1,22** Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity….. Keep yourself pure.

**Ephesians 5:3** But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity… because these are improper for God's holy people.

This includes being **MODEST IN DRESS**. Without "defining" what to wear, just be sure your clothing glorifies God, not yourself. Don’t allow it to distract from spiritual things.

**1 Timothy 2:9** I also want women [AND MEN] to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, … with good deeds, appropriate for [MEN AND] women who profess to worship God.

1. **BE RESPECTFUL OF AUTHORITY** in word, action, and attitude.

**Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

**I Thessalonians 5:12** Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.

1. **BE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS.**  The spiritual upbringing of children belongs first to the parents. The church’s role is to supplement the training in the home. Always seek to work with the parents of the children whom you minister to. Seek their input, listen to their concerns. Never side with a child against a parent or contradict a parent in front of a child. You are on the parent’s team! If you have a concern about a parent or a home situation, talk to the Children’s Pastor immediately.

**Proverbs 22:6** Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

1. **BE TEACHABLE IN SPIRIT.**  This may be the most important trait of any volunteer who is seeking to serve the Lord! We all have weaknesses, but if we remain teachable, there is always hope! We must be willing to listen to constructive criticism and prayerfully consider the input of others. We do not need to always agree, but if we fail to listen, we only hurt ourselves and rob ourselves of another chance to grow.

**Proverbs 12:15** The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

**Proverbs 13:10** Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

**We welcome your input and feedback. Please discuss suggestions with a lead team member.**

Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare Your power

to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come.

**Psalm 71:18 (NIV)**

**Resources**

Books:

Think Orange by Reggie Joiner

Parenting Beyond Your Capacity by Carey Nieuwhof / Reggie Joiner

On Guard Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church by Deepak Reju

Rock-Solid Children’s Ministry by Larry Fowler

Leading a Child to Christ by David Staal

Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions by George Barna

Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey by Catherine Stonehouse

Real Kids, Real Faith by Karen Marie Yost

Making Children’s Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid’s Week by Sue Miller and David Staall

Websites:

www.kidology.org

www.kidzmatter.com

www.childrensministry.com (Children’s Ministry Magazine)

www.incm.org  (International Network of Children’s Ministry)

Commitment Page

In signing this you agree to fulfill the role of volunteer as outlined and commit to serving our Lord Jesus using the gifts given you by the Holy Spirit here in The Treehouse Kids Ministry for the duration of one year. You also agree to following the procedures, rules, policies, and standards of excellence outlined in this document.

           

Signature           Date