

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY POLICIES FOR SPRINGFIELD FIRST

Our Philosophy

At Springfield First, we believe that every child was made uniquely by a God that loves them unconditionally. All that we do is rooted in the connect, grow, serve mission of Springfield First. Volunteers come alongside the children as an example of biblical love and leadership. Our purpose is to plant the seed of faith in children so that they are equipped to grow into their own personal relationship with Christ. We provide a safe, child-centered atmosphere where children can experience the love of God in tangible ways. The children learn the bible through developmentally appropriate activities that spark curiosity and joy at every age level. All that we do at Let's Grow! is rooted in Christ's love for every individual child.

Our Mission Statement

"We will help families connect with God and one another, grow as followers of Christ, and serve our community with joyful hearts."

Our Goals

We value every individual that comes in contact with our ministry, not just the children we serve on Sunday morning. Because of that, we have worked to create goals that can be applied to the child, the family, and our volunteers.

- Child: Our ministry is a child-centered ministry. The goal is that children understand that they are loved unconditionally by the God that made them and get equipped to be able to form their own relationship with Christ.
- Family: We walk alongside the entire family as a unit. Our goal is to create a supportive environment for parents to establish a community to surround their children with Christ-like examples. We help families understand that ministry is not limited to a Sunday morning, but instead must be continued into the home.
- Volunteers: We expect volunteers to be growing in their faith in addition to walking alongside the children on Sundays. Volunteers will have opportunities to build a community with one another in order to support the loving environment we strive to provide for families.

Health and Safety Procedures

We believe God calls each of us to be good stewards of our community, therefore, safety for the children and families we serve is our top priority. Below you will find the safety procedures in place to protect volunteers, children, and families.

Volunteer application process

- Initial form
 - Prospective volunteers will fill out an interest form through Pastor Dorie as the first step in becoming a Children's ministry volunteer. This form must be completed in full before the process can continue.
- Follow- up with Pastor Dorie
 - After the form is completed, Pastor Dorie will meet for a one- on- one with the individual via phone call or in person. This follow- up is a time for Dorie to hear the volunteers testimony and get more information for the next step.
- Background Check
 - The church will conduct a thorough background check through a third party source. This background check is essential to keeping our children and volunteers safe in the classrooms. Training and shadowing cannot begin until the background check is completed.
- Training and Shadowing
 - Once the background check is completed and the individual is cleared by Pastor Dorie, the volunteer will need to complete a Sunday morning walk through training with Dorie before they are added to the schedule rotation. This training will be completed before families arrive. After this walkthrough, the volunteer will be placed with a seasoned volunteer to shadow during that Sunday morning service. If the volunteer feels confident in their training, they will be placed on the schedule!

Sunday morning check- in

- When volunteers arrive for a Sunday Morning shift, they will check- in with the front desk before going to their respective position. They will receive their name tag from the person working the desk.

Children's Ministry Wing Safety

- Safety and security for our children and families is the utmost importance at Springfield First. As a volunteer, you have a responsibility to keep your eyes and ears open at all times for any safety concerns, suspicious visitors, safety hazards, and potential accidents. If any of the above are discovered, please report them immediately to the Children's Pastor.
- Only in the event of emergency may adults use the sanctuary doors to enter the children's wing. All traffic must flow through the hallway entrance from the lobby, past the check in desk. An individual may be denied entrance into the wing if they are not cleared to be in that area or accompanied by the Children's Pastor.
- A child must never be left alone. After services and events, children's ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure that every child has been picked up by the designated adult responsible for their care. If a staff member or volunteer finds themselves alone with a single child, they should take the child to an area that is occupied by others or to a location easily observed by others.
- All working volunteers must be wearing their designated name tags at all times when volunteering so families and children know who is representing the Children's Ministry that service or event. If an adult is not scheduled or wearing a name tag, they may be asked to leave the children's wing.

Ratios

- We ask that there are always at least two screened leaders in each classroom. The following are the child to adult ratio guidelines for each classroom:

Nursery- 3:1

Early elementary- 6:1

Elementary- 15:1

If a volunteer or staff member is out of ratio, it is their responsibility to immediately notify the Children's Pastor. They will then make a diligent effort to find additional help to bring ratios into compliance. Only those who have undergone training and a background check will be able to step in as additional help in programming.

Missing Child Procedure

- In the event that a child is unaccounted for, the Safety and Security Team will be primarily responsible for coordinating the search effort for the missing

child. The Security Team will work with and communicate with the Children's Pastor.

Mandated reporting

- As per the state of Illinois, the Children's Pastor is a mandated reporter. This means that as a volunteer if you see any signs of abuse, have a child confide in you regarding abuse in the home, or suspect a child is in danger, this must be reported to the Children's Pastor and taken to the authorities if the situation requires.

Discipline

- Children's ministry staff and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management. Children can be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical, respectful methods of behavior management. Examples include: verbal redirection, removing a child from the situation, time-out with simple, understandable reasoning for the time-out explained to the child, or notifying a parent/guardian.
- To notify a parent/guardian of disruptive behavior that would require the child to be removed from the classroom, the room volunteer must contact the Children's Pastor, who will retrieve the parent from the sanctuary.

Custody Issues

- If there is a court order in regard to the child, we ask that this be noted in KidCheck and brought to the attention of the children's Pastor, who will then notify the classroom volunteers. We also ask parents/guardians to provide a copy of the court document to keep on file.

Parental/Guardian Involvement

- All family members are encouraged to visit any and all services in which their child is involved in. There is an open invitation for family members to observe all programs and activities, with the consent of the children's Pastor, in which their child is involved. However, individuals who desire to participate in or have continuous contact with the children's program will be required to complete the volunteer application, background check, follow-up, and training process.

Illness Agreement

- Individuals who are experiencing signs of illness in the form of fever, vomiting, etc. will not be allowed in the classrooms with children. If a child or volunteer is sick, they must be removed from the classroom immediately.

Allergies

- We ask that families inform us of any allergies/diet restrictions through the Kid Check program. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to keep us up to date on all medical needs.

Diaper bags and changing

- In the nursery, all diaper bags must be labeled with the child's name. If a diaper bag is not labeled, families will be asked to fill out a diaper bag tag upon drop off. Diaper changes will be done by screened adult workers. Teenage help cannot perform diaper changes until they are 17 years old. Should you need help in the changing of diapers, alert the Children's Pastor.

Bathroom Procedures

- Children must be accompanied to the bathroom in the kids' wing by a staff member or volunteer. It is best to take at least two children at a time. Verify the bathroom is unoccupied before allowing children to enter. Volunteers must wait in the hallways unless a child indicates they need help. If assistance is needed, the volunteer must leave the bathroom door partially open.

Accidents should be handled with reassurance of the child. In the event that a child needs underwear or clothing changes, please contact their parent/guardian by calling their cell phone.

Physical Contact

Springfield First is dedicated to creating a safe, nurturing environment for all children. In order to do this, we have strict guidelines for physical contact with children. Please read and follow the rules below:

1. All appropriate forms of physical affections (hugs, pats on back, high fives, etc) must be child- initiated and done in the presence of others.

2. Inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden and will lead to the removal of a volunteer or staff member.
3. Physical contact will never be given in the appearance of wrongdoing or forced onto a child.
4. Children's ministry staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

Natural disasters and lock downs

- In the event that the building is not safe, volunteers will receive an alert from the Children's Pastor. Volunteers must line up their children and take roll calls to ensure that all children are accounted for. Depending on the situation, appropriate safety procedures will take place calmly and orderly by the guidance of the Children's Pastor and the Springfield First safety team.

Sunday Morning Information

Classroom Breakdown

- We have 3 open classrooms at the moment. Those are the nursery, toddler room, and our elementary age room. The nursery has children up to 2 years of age. 2-4 year olds are in our toddler room. The elementary room has students from kindergarten up to 6th grade. If there are more than 2 children in any given room, there will be at least 2 adults.

Positions

- Check- in Desk
 - This position is the first person a new or returning family will see on a Sunday morning. This role is responsible for printing name tags for students and giving the pick up receipt to caregivers. This position opens the desk at 10:15 am and remains open until 11:00 am. After 11:00 am, families must communicate with the Children's Pastor before bringing their child into a classroom.
- Teacher
 - Lead Volunteers in the classrooms are responsible for delivering the curriculum to the students. Leads will also be responsible for making sure attendance is taken when the child enters and the pick up receipt matches the child before the child leaves. These receipts will be turned in to the classroom mailbox with the attendance after the last child

leaves. The attendance sheet will be signed by the teacher and Pastor Dorie each Sunday.

- Classroom Help
 - This position is scheduled as a second pair of hands and ears for the lead volunteer. As a helper, it will be your responsibility to make sure the classroom is put back to the way it was before children arrived at the end of service. Classroom help is also responsible for taking children to the restroom and retrieving parents from the sanctuary if they are needed for a situation.

Scheduling

- Volunteer schedules will be posted 2 months at a time. They will be sent out via email and posted on the Children's Pastor's office door. If anyone needs a sub or gets sick, the Children's Pastor must be notified as soon as possible to find a replacement. No call no show on a Sunday Morning will result in a well being follow- up from the Children's Pastor. 3 failures to show without notice will result in a sit down with Pastor Dorie to evaluate the volunteer status going forward and possible redirecting to another position.

Arrival and Leaving

- Upon arrival, volunteers must check- in with the Children's Ministry front desk. There, they will receive their name tag that must be worn while actively in a volunteer position. When leaving after service, any information that needs to be turned in from the classrooms must be dropped off will be left in the classroom mailbox. Name tags need to be returned to the check- in desk.

Incident Reports

- If an incident occurs that results in the child being injured or starts a tantrum, the classroom teacher must fill out an incident report. These reports are located at the front desk and must be signed by the teacher, parent, and the Children's Pastor