



Welcome to Parkway Baptist Church!

At Parkway, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment where children can grow in their relationship with Jesus.

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

After carefully reading this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form on the last page.

Sincerely,

Parkway Baptist Church
Staff & Elder Board

Parkway Baptist Church Policies & Procedures for Children’s Ministries

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Overview of the Parkway Baptist Church Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Parkway requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Parkway policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior. Staff members and volunteers must report any policy violations to a staff member or a Parkway Baptist Church Safety Team member. Staff members and volunteers should understand 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 staff members and volunteers with the information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Parkway Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete Ministry Safe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Parkway Baptist Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only)
 - complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
 - complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
 - provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- * a volunteer must be a member of Parkway Baptist Church for six months before being eligible to serve in volunteer positions providing access to children, students, or vulnerable populations.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers must review the policies in this manual and sign the last page indicating that they have read and understood the material and agree to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

Parkway Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming to undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the position, background checks may require different levels or intensity. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes will not be allowed to serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

Child Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Parkway Baptist Church has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and activities. Every staff member and volunteer at Parkway is responsible for acting in the best interest of all children in every program.

If staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Children's Director, or the Senior Pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Parkway Baptist Church is committed to providing children and their families with a safe, secure environment. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and reported, per this policy and state law, to the Parkway Baptist Church Safety Team Chair and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agencies.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes fostering a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a Parkway Baptist Church Safety Team member. 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 expected to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a Parkway Baptist Church Safety Team member.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Parkway Baptist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with diligently enforcing all Parkway Baptist Church 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. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

To maintain a safe environment for our children, Parkway Baptist Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of their responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation violating these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Children's Director, or the Senior Pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Parkway Baptist Church Children's Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be banned from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students, or vulnerable populations at Parkway Baptist Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may result in immediate termination of employment.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person violates this policy and is grounds for termination (employee) or removal (volunteer). Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act will be restricted from participating in activities involving children, students, or vulnerable populations.

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Parkway Baptist Church is committed to providing children and their families with a safe, secure environment. To this end, any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and reported to Child Protective Services or criminal law enforcement by this policy and state law.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible that a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, such that the church may take appropriate action to safeguard children in the program.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS)

Abuse Hotline: 1-800-222-8000

Because many adults are unfamiliar with Mississippi reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, Parkway Baptist Church utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when a Parkway supervisor reports the suspicion or allegation with the individual who saw, heard, or received information causing them to suspect abuse or neglect.

THIS PRACTICE IS NOT REQUIRED OR INTENDED TO INHIBIT ANY STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER FROM REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, CPS, OR THE ABUSE HOTLINE *DIRECTLY*. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children, and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone.

NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from Parkway Baptist Church before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline.

While not required by state law, report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect (or any inappropriate or 'grooming' behaviors of a colleague or coworker) to an immediate supervisor or a Parkway Baptist Church Safety Team member. This request is intended to assist the church in adequately protecting children involved in Parkway Baptist Church programs.

When in doubt, report.

Safety Team

SAFETY TEAM

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Parkway will appoint and support a Safety Team, which will meet once each quarter.

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

COMPOSITION

The Safety Team will be comprised of the following members:

- the Senior Pastor
- the Children's Director
- the Student Pastor
- the Church Administrator
- the Elder Board Chairman

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying Parkway policies and procedures concerning children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Parkway Board of Elders regarding safety issues.

Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

BUILDING SAFETY

Every ministry supervisor is responsible for monitoring the ministry program area while serving children. This includes unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers, and children. During regular programming, classes, or activities, children will always be supervised in a ministry area or on a playground.

SUPERVISION

Only parents (dropping off children), screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children occurs. All other adults or children who have completed 6th grade 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 supervisor 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 to follow the Two Adult Rule.

If two individuals serving in a room are related to one another, a third unrelated, volunteer or staff member must be present.

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 readily 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 alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you.

After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area, and restroom are checked before leaving.

PLAYGROUNDS

Remember to circulate and watch children during play on the playground, mainly focusing on areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) playground area.

Child Safety Measures

WORKER-TO-CHILD RATIOS

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

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 & 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 & 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
VBS	2	20

If a worker is 'out of ratio,' they must immediately notify the program supervisor or the Children's Director. Supervisors will diligently find substitute workers to bring worker-to-children ratios into church policy compliance directly.

CHECK-IN

Upon check-in, each child will receive a wristband, and their parent or guardian will be given a matching wristband. Volunteers must check each wristband before releasing a child at pick-up.

If a wristband is lost, send the parent or guardian to the Children's Director, where proper identification must be shown to a staff member before the child is released. (Have the child stay in the classroom; the parent may pick up the child once cleared).

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time a child has been entrusted to Parkway Baptist Church staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and security of the children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children into their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other adults designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed that a person who drops off a child or student has the authority to pick up the child.

If staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Children's Director before releasing the child.

Disciplinary Policies

DISCIPLINE

Parkway Baptist Church's policy is that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline for children's behavioral management. **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 them to stop the behavior. (Most children respond immediately and correct the behavior.) Give a warning, remind the child of class expectations, and redirect to positive behavior. Do this individually, and when possible, try not to single out a specific child in a large group setting. 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. 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 clearly explain your expectations.

("Terry, you didn't stop hitting Kelly when I asked you to, so I needed 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 redirect misbehavior.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to the ministry supervisor.

NEVER...

- Never yell at a child.
- Never grab a child.
- Never threaten a child. Always follow through with your word.
- 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 unacceptable in Parkway's ministry programs. There is no "harmless put-down" where bullying is concerned. At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your ministry supervisor.

1. *First Offense:* Issue a warning to the child and a general reminder to the group that this interaction is wrong. Try not to embarrass or chastise.
2. *Second Offense:* Pull the offending child(ren) from the group (in a seen or supervised location) and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals. Let the child know that communication with a pastor and the child's parents is the next step. Notify an immediate supervisor of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.

Privately, but with another adult present, confirm that a child who was the target of the bullying behaviors is not in danger of continued harassment and is physically and emotionally stable. **DO NOT SINGLE A CHILD OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP ... be discreet.**

3. *Third Offense:* Send the child to a pastor or ministry supervisor for a phone call (or communication onsite) with their parent(s) and possible removal from the activity or event.

Restroom Policies

DO NOT USE OR OCCUPY a bathroom in use by children. Adults should use a restroom separate from restrooms used by children during weekend services or when children are present. No volunteer OF ANY AGE should enter or occupy a bathroom while children use it. When no child is present, adults (and young volunteers) are allowed in a bathroom (one at a time) so long as another adult at the doorway keeps any child from entering. Only adult females may change diapers and must do so on diaper changer stations within plain view of other volunteers.

NURSERY CHILDREN

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

Diapering

- Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will diaper children of either sex.
- Changing diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon changing their soiled diapers.
- Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- When children are taken into bathrooms, the door will be left partially open.
- Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.

- “Accidents” should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. If the parent has not furnished a clothing change, extra clothing and diapers are available from Parkway in the children’s area.

GRADES 1-6

If you must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another worker to accompany you. If another worker is unavailable, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. Do not enter the restroom.

If a child requires immediate assistance, leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their toileting activities while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

If restroom use is required:

- Only *adult* female workers will assist children in the restroom unless a parent is helping their child.
- Only one child in the restroom at a time, in a single toilet facility.
- When a worker is assisting a child, the door must not be locked and must remain ajar. Encourage children to do all they can for themselves. Children should generally receive the minimum assistance needed based on their capabilities.
- All students in grades 1-3 must be accompanied to the restroom by a female leader. 4th and 5th-grade students may go to KIDS ONLY bathrooms alone with permission from their teacher.
- Be aware if a student repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods. Report this behavior to a supervisor if it occurs.
- A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone child to the restroom.

SPECIAL NEEDS

After age 4, parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. Parents will instruct staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom, a special needs volunteer may assist them in the bathroom.

Medication

Do not administer medication to any child while serving in ministry programs, including 'over-the-counter drugs.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may, from time to time, be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transport of children:

- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport. Unauthorized stops in a non-public place should be avoided.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children in vehicles.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving vehicles owned or rented by Parkway unless in an emergency.
- No drivers under age 25 or over 65 may drive Parkway-owned or rented vehicles.

Verbal Interactions with Children

Verbal interactions between staff members, volunteers, and children should be positive and uplifting. Parkway staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal exchanges encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in children's spiritual growth and development.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

One-to-One Interactions with Children

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interact with children while participating in Parkway Children's Ministry programs. Another adult who has completed the Parkway application and screening process should always be present.

Physical Contact

Parkway Baptist Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Parkway 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 essential for children's development. They 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 an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director, or the Senior Pastor.
- Physical contact should be for the child's benefit and never be based upon a staff member's or volunteer's emotional needs.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or 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 should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must always foster trust. 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 touching by others.
- Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director, or the Senior Pastor.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs in any Parkway Baptist Church facility, traveling with children, or working with or supervising children.

Tobacco Use

Parkway requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from using or possessing tobacco products in church facilities, in the presence of children or their parents, or during Parkway activities or programs. Parkway Baptist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in sexually oriented conversations with children. They are not permitted to discuss inappropriate or explicit information about their personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program.

Sexually Oriented Material

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries at Parkway are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers in Parkway Baptist Church's Children's Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. If 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.), a staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the Children's Director concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

Parental Involvement

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Parkway Baptist Church 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 all services and programs their child is involved in at Parkway. Parents are invited to observe all programs and activities involving their children. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at Parkway must complete the Parkway volunteer application and screening process.

Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

This page will be signed, detached, and delivered to the Ministry Supervisor.

I have received and read a copy of Parkway Baptist Church's 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 or working at Parkway.

I understand the manual may be modified, and Parkway may amend, revise, or eliminate guidelines.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Parkway at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines in this handbook do not express or imply a contractual employment relationship between Parkway and me. 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 Parkway Baptist Church policies and procedures manual and understand that any infraction of the policy and procedures can result in immediate termination of employment or restriction from participation in any activities involving children, students, or vulnerable populations.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____