

## **Children and Youth Ministry Safety Policy**

### **1) Introduction**

- a) It is our desire to protect the children among us and ensure their safety as our Lord has implicitly commanded (Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2). This is the view of all of our members, staff and leadership. As such, we all agree to submit to certain procedures when it comes to how our children's ministry is done.
- b) URC's Ministry to children and families is a ministry under the authority and direction of the Board of Elders of URC. The *authorized persons* described in this document should be understood to be the authorized agents of the elders charged with conducting ministry in the way put forth in this document. Furthermore, violation of this policy will subject a volunteer or worker to the disciplinary authority of the Elders.

### **2) Definition of Key Terms**

- a) Authorized Persons – This will include paid staff (the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Ministry Director) under the authority of the Board of Elders.
- b) Preschool – Ages newborn through 4.
- c) Grade School – Ages 5 through 11.
- d) Middle School – Ages 12 through 13.
- e) High School – Ages 14 through 18.
- f) Volunteer – any person working with children at URC.
- g) Student – children attending URC functions
- h) Screening – any and all relevant inquiries regarding the moral qualifications of a given volunteer that are required to work with youth and children.(up to and including, but not necessarily a criminal background check)
- i) Abuse
  - i) Verbal – Demeaning language or speech. Yelling, threatening, berating.
  - ii) Physical – Any use of punitive physical discipline. Unwanted or excessive rough play.
  - iii) Sexual – Any touch or communication intended for sexual purposes.

### **3) Safety Procedures**

- a) General
  - i) Screening
    - (1) Each person who volunteers to work with children should fill out an information sheet (*see section 5*) which includes authorization to conduct screening
    - (2) Each class coordinator shall inform teachers of this need upon recruiting the volunteer.
    - (3) In certain cases, due to the size of our growing congregation, parents are required to rotate through a childcare schedule as opposed to being recruited on interest or gifting. Such parents will be informed of URC's desire to keep children safe and the procedures implemented to that end, and will be required to submit to the potential screening (namely, filling out information sheet which includes authorization, *see Section 5*). Parents who do not wish to submit to such screening will not be put on the child care rotation.
    - (4) This *will not* include children (under age 18) of families volunteering alongside their parents, but *will* include children (under the age 18) who are volunteering separate from their parents.
    - (5) No teachers will be made to work before submitting their signed information sheet.
    - (6) In very limited cases where there is an urgent need certain persons may be “grandfathered in” with approval from authorized persons.
    - (7) Screening will be conducted confidentially, discreetly and at the discretion of authorized persons.
    - (8) All forms gathered will be kept in a secure location, and only accessed for purposes of screening.
- b) Attendance
  - i) Teachers and other lead Sunday school workers shall have been attending URC for more than 6 months.
  - ii) Hired child care workers and Sunday school aides will be exempt from this requirement.
- c) Travel
  - i) Permission slips (*see Section 5*)

- (1) Every effort will be made to let parents know of activities that may take place off site. Parents are responsible to know that bringing a child to an event implies permission to participate in that event (on or off-site). While we recognize the need for parents to be notified of certain activities, we also affirm the responsibility of parents to find out what activities their child will be participating in.
    - (2) Permission slips will be gathered from parents when any trips from the church building outside the Lansing area are planned.
  - ii) Medical release forms (*see Section 5*)
    - (1) For retreats or other events that take place overnight or out of state, parents will sign medical release forms.
- d) Volunteer training
  - i) Volunteers should be given training for their specific ministry. Training will be conducted in two phases. (1Th 5:11)
    - (1) One will be specific instruction given by the coordinator for each class. (This may be done informally; it should be done before the volunteer begins working)
    - (2) The other will be a general training given by the children's ministry director or other church official relating to issues covered in this document. (This will be a yearly more formal training for new volunteers; it should be done in the Fall)
- e) Preschool and grade school specific procedures
  - i) Number of teachers
    - (1) There should be at least two workers in any preschool through grade school class at all times. (Ecc 4:9)
  - ii) Discipline
    - (1) Discipline will vary for different ages and in different situations.
      - (a) Physical discipline of any kind will not be used, with the exception of gentle physical redirection or restraint as needed in the case of violence by the child.
      - (2) Short "time away" periods will be used to correct inappropriate behavior; a good rule of thumb is one minute for each year of age. In cases of extreme disruptiveness the parents of the child will be called upon to manage the behavior.
  - iii) Bathrooms / diapers
    - (1) Bathroom
      - (a) While assisting preschoolers, the worker shall stand outside the bathroom and leave the door open.
    - (2) Diapers
      - (a) Changing tables are in plain view of the door and other workers.
      - (b) Diapers will only be changed if there is an obvious need.
- f) Middle and High School specific procedures
  - i) Propriety Issues
    - (1) While it goes without saying that certain propriety should be followed by volunteers in relation to opposite sex, let us specifically note some here.
      - (a) Beginning romantic (dating, etc) relationships of any kind between volunteers and students is always inappropriate. Each volunteer will be expected to adhere to this principle. (1Ti 5:2)
      - (b) There should be no one on one meetings (Sunday school class, etc.) between a volunteer and student of the opposite sex.

**4) If abuse is reported**

- a) By a child about a volunteer
  - i) All reports will be passed along to the proper authorities for the situation (parents, Police, the Elders).
    - (1) The Board of Elders will assume responsibility for appropriate discipline, counsel and guidance.
  - ii) Volunteer will not work in children's or youth ministry during the investigatory period.
- b) By a child to a teacher about something outside of church
  - i) Volunteers should report to their coordinator and or the Children's or Youth Ministry Director.
  - ii) All reports will be passed along to the proper authorities for the situation (parents, Police, the Elders)..
    - (1) The Board of Elders will assume responsibility for appropriate discipline, counsel and guidance.

**5) Forms**

**Information sheet for Children's Ministry volunteers and employees**

Name:		Phone:	
Address:		City, state, zip:	
DL#:		DOB:	
Most recent (2) states of residence:			

*I authorize the representatives of University Reformed Church to make any and all appropriate inquiries regarding my background, including, if desired, a criminal investigation check. I waive the right to any future knowledge or notice of such inquiries.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*All information will be held in confidence and used by ONLY for the purpose stated above.  
(over)*

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**For Teachers, Leaders and Coordinators:**

Do you ascribe to the URC Statement of Faith? \_\_\_\_\_

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**URC Permission Slip**

I give permission for my (son/daughter) \_\_\_\_\_  
to go with URC on their trip to \_\_\_\_\_  
Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

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## URC Medical Release Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (H): \_\_\_\_\_ (W): \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Insurance Info

Name of Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Group Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In whose name is the insurance? \_\_\_\_\_

Family Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Health Info

Pre-existing or present medical conditions \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Medicines that should be taken:

	name / dosage	frequency
1		
2		

Any allergies? \_\_\_\_\_ Tetanus shot within last 5 years? \_\_\_\_\_

*I understand that if medical attention is needed by my son/daughter, every attempt will be made to contact the persons listed on this form immediately. In the event that I cannot be reached in an emergency, I hereby give my permission to the physician or dentist selected by the activity leader to hospitalize, to secure medical treatment, and/ or to order an injection, anesthesia or surgery for my child as deemed necessary.*

*I understand that my insurance coverage for my child will be used as primary coverage in the event that medical intervention is necessary.*

*I understand that all reasonable safety precautions will be taken at all times by the staff and representatives of University Reformed Church during these activities.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian

Witness: : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_