

Winchester Baptist Church

Children's Ministry Handbook

This is a draft of Winchester's Child Protection Policy, effective January 1, 2020. This document is subject to change per the elders' discretion and according to advice from Winchester's legal counsel.

Philosophy

The Children's Ministry at Winchester Baptist Church exists to see the gospel transform the next generation. Our goal is to help children become followers of Jesus Christ by:

- Teaching children the gospel of Jesus Christ, not just Bible stories or moral lessons.
- Using methods of instruction, interaction, and engagement which are held to a high standard of excellence and with curriculum that is age appropriate.

We believe that only the gospel can change children, families, and neighborhoods. As we minister the gospel to children, we are participating in Winchester Baptist Church's larger vision of spreading the gospel throughout the Winchester and the surrounding area.

How will you assist me as a parent?

Every Christian parent wants to raise children who will grow up to love and trust Jesus. Parents rightly expect their church to assist them in maximizing opportunities for their kids to grow up in the Lord. We want Winchester to be that church!

Yet, as we continue to build our children's ministry, we must not neglect our homes—where children see our faith on real-time display every day. According to the Bible, parents have the primary responsibility for teaching our children about God. His word must be prominent in our conversation and daily life with our kids. Training our children in godliness is not something that we can put off until they're older. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we read:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your

heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

The call to training our children in godliness is comprehensive. According to Deuteronomy 6, we have responsibility to teach our children during mealtime, drivetime, bedtime, and in the morning.

Winchester's leadership recognizes that we have a responsibility as a church to walk alongside parents as they train their children in godliness. Beyond our weekly corporate gatherings and small group Bible studies where parents are taught the Word of God, we provide one-on-one discipleship for couples or single parents. In addition, we are happy to provide a list of recommended books and other resources that parents will find useful.

What should I be doing at home to train my child spiritually?

There is no more important influence in the life of a child than the influence of the home. The home is the frontline of ministry to children—not the Sunday school or public church gathering. All the practices present in a Christian worship service—the Scriptures, prayer, and praise—should be present in the home as well.

However, these practices tend to be less effective if done in a mechanical, abstract manner, “by rote,” as if they were some sort of a drill. And we cannot effectively teach children the Gospel in a negative, repressive, or manipulative manner. The truths of God should be taught in an atmosphere of love.

As parents, we must make God's word prominent throughout our lives and conversations. Children learn as much from what we do as from what we say. And kids have lots of questions that present us with opportunities to teach the truth. “Teachable moments” arise more often than we realize.

Why is the gospel so important? Can't this wait until my child is older?

We believe that the stories of the Bible are not mere moralistic fables about the adventures of certain individuals who lived long ago. The Bible reveals God's plan to save humanity from sin through Jesus' death and resurrection. The Bible is a book about Jesus Christ, the one true Savior. Curriculum used by Winchester Baptist Church is designed to make the character of God and the person and work of Jesus central in every story and lesson.

We also believe that children, just like adults, need Jesus' saving love (Romans 3:23; 6:23). When we teach children about God's plan to save humanity, it is necessary to teach them their personal need for the Savior. We do not flatter or deceive children by teaching them that their nature is good and needs only to be developed. Rather, we tenderly teach a child about his or her own failures—pointing out the specific sins to which children are prone (lying, disobedience to parents, etc.). Our goal is to be tender but true. We pray that the Holy Spirit will use the truth to bring conviction to the child's heart and conscience, and ultimately to give the gift of faith.

What do we mean by “methods of instruction and interaction that are both effective and age-appropriate”?

A child's basic attitude toward God, his Word, and his church is formed from the attitudes and actions of the adults in their lives during their earliest years. Psalm 78:5-7 states:

He established a testimony for Jacob and established the law in Israel that he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

The philosophy of education for Winchester Baptist Church is modeled after the progression found in these verses. It can be described as helping move children from knowing the gospel story to participating in it. This progression is modeled after the movement found in Psalm 78:5-7. From their earliest years, our nursery age children are taught basic Bible doctrines and stories as they are spoken in blessings and prayers. Our preschoolers and early elementary-age students are also taught to see and

memorize basic Bible truths. There is an emphasis on knowing how the major Bible doctrines and stories fit together as one grand story with Christ at its center. Moreover, our kids at this age level are challenged to participate in God's story by living out their faith in community. Our goal is that they will be prepared to tell the next generation God's grand story.

Policies and Procedures

What do you expect of me as a parent? What should I bring?

Parents will be responsible for any diaper/clothing changes that may be needed. If a child needs a diaper/clothing change or needs to go to the bathroom, the Children's Ministry workers will text you.

Children will not be given any food/snacks/beverages during Nursery/Children's Church. We ask that parents help us by making sure any food/beverages from the refreshment table be consumed before the children enter the nursery/children's church room. See Food Policy section on page 6.

Parents should notify workers of any allergies or special circumstances their child may have.

What do you mean by “a caring and safe environment that fosters relationship skills”?

Ensuring a safe environment is crucial to our mission. We observe the following policies for the safety and security of all children and volunteers.

General Safety and Security Policies

All Winchester Baptist Church teachers and aids are faithful attendees at Winchester Baptist Church. Junior high and high school students active in the life of the congregation at Winchester may serve as classroom aids. All volunteers must have

completed an official Winchester Baptist Church training session, submitted to a criminal background/reference check, and have been asked to serve by a member of the Winchester Baptist Church leadership team. Anyone convicted of child abuse or a related offense may not serve in the children's ministry. In the event that there are last-minute volunteers who have not been screened, they will be approved by a staff member and placed with a volunteer that has been background checked.

All volunteers receive training, which covers our philosophy of ministry, policies and procedures, curriculum, and guidelines for effective and age-appropriate teaching.

All classrooms are staffed by a team of two or more volunteers. Under no circumstances is a child to be left in a classroom or anywhere unattended. A parent must stay with a child until a teacher arrives.

Winchester Baptist Church has an open policy so that all parents/guardians have access to their children at all times.

Secure Check-in/Check-out Procedure

Classrooms will open 10 minutes prior to regularly scheduled church activities and will close 10 minutes after the completion of our worship services.

Your child's safety is our first priority even if it requires extra time.

- Please take your child to the restroom before children's church.
- Please pick up your child promptly after the worship service.

If for any reason you are needed in the children's area during the worship service, we will call or text a parent's cell phone. We ask that parents provide a cell number when checking in and set their phone to vibrate. Parents will be notified after 2-3 minutes if their child remains inconsolable and unable to adjust.

Only parents, legal guardians, or individuals they designate may retrieve a child from the children's ministry area.

Sickness Policy

If your child is sick, please respect others by keeping him or her with you. If your child shows signs of sickness (including, but not limited to, high fever, vomiting,

diarrhea, severe coughing, colored nasal drainage, pink eye, head lice, undiagnosed rash, open skin lesions, and any infectious disease), we reserve the right to ask you to remove him or her from the classroom.

We define an infectious disease as any disease that spreads from one person to another person. We believe that God has called us to minister to all people and will, therefore, strive to provide a safe environment that is safe and accepting of everyone. Children who appear, or become, ill at church will be isolated from the other children, and the parent/guardian will be summoned immediately.

Parents are asked to contact a member of the Winchester Baptist Church leadership team if their child contracts an infectious disease after attending a church gathering.

The medical condition of any child or Winchester Baptist Church volunteer will be disclosed only to the extent necessary to minimize the health risk to the person and others. Winchester's elders and the Winchester Baptist Church leadership team will be provided with the appropriate information concerning any special precaution that may be necessary. Except as set forth above, Winchester Baptist Church will not disclose the health status of any individual without the express written consent and permission of that individual, or in the case of a child, their parent or guardian.

Food Policies

Infants will be given formula, milk, juice, or water when parents provide these items and written instructions. Time and circumstances do not allow for spoon-feeding.

Discipline Policy

The effective spiritual formation of all our children requires a stable environment. The role of Winchester Baptist Church is to support and supplement parental training by upholding high standards of behavior, respect and discipline. Some of the expectations we have for your child include:

- Every child participates with a willing heart, eager to learn and obey. The attitude should be respectful to authority.
- The child is to avoid being disruptive or distracting to the mission and purpose of the children's ministry.
- Disrespect (whether verbally, by gesture, in attitude, or by action) is

unacceptable.

- Misbehavior (including, but not limited to, persistent talking, distracting others, not following instructions, ignoring instructions or directions, or interacting inappropriately with others in the class) is unacceptable.

If your child is being disruptive or unruly, volunteers are trained to give the child verbal warnings and to place the child in “timeout” if disobedience persists. If these measures do not resolve the issue, we will call you and ask you to remove your child from the room.

Since our goal is to assist you in the effective training and instruction of your child, teachers and Winchester Baptist Church leaders will talk with you about any consistent behavioral problems we are experiencing with your child. Sometimes kids will be kids, and we’re okay with that! But Scripture does teach that proper training and expectations are crucial to raising godly children (Proverbs 22:6). A major goal during all disciplinary situations is to help children see that they have sinned against God and their neighbor and to encourage asking for and extending forgiveness.

No child in Winchester Baptist Church Children's Ministry will be subject to: corporal punishment (including, but not limited to, rough handling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, hitting, and spanking); emotional abuse (including, but not limited to, name calling, shaming, threatening, humiliation, or yelling); or the use of physical restraint (unless restraint is necessary to protect others from harm). If any volunteer or staff is guilty of inappropriate action toward a child, he or she may be subject to removal and/or discipline by the church. Furthermore, he or she may be subject to criminal and/or civil assault charges under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Sanitation and Hygiene Policies

The very nature of childhood behavior can create an environment that has the potential to spread infection. Therefore, it is our commitment to try and maintain the safest and cleanest atmosphere possible to ensure the health and welfare of all children.

Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

Under Virginia law, certain types of persons, who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, must report the matter immediately to the local department of public welfare or social

services of the county or city in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred, or call the Virginia DSS's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline.¹

In addition, under Virginia law, any person, whether or not legally required to report, who has reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child may file a complaint concerning such child with the local department of public welfare or social services of the county or city in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or call the Virginia Department of Social Services toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline.

In light of the existing Virginia law, and as set forth more fully below, Winchester Baptist Church requires that in any instance in which a Winchester Baptist Church member, in the context of Church-related activities or relationships, comes into possession of information that suggests child abuse and/or child neglect, he or she must report the matter to a pastor or, if no pastor is available, to another Elder. Winchester Baptist Church will provide all people serving with children a copy of the child abuse and neglect reporting requirements of the Virginia Code (as provided in this document). See Attachment C for a more detailed listing of the relevant Virginia Laws and Regulations.

Foundations

The biblical, legal, and factual bases for these policy provisions on reporting suspected abuse or neglect include (without limitation) the following:

God has blessed this Church with faithful and committed members who strive to live together in transparent and God-honoring relationships with one another in accordance with the Bible and with the biblical member covenant that the Church has adopted.

This Church understands biblical doctrine to recognize that Church members serving as Church volunteers or interacting with other Church members in the context of Church-related activities and relationships do so in their capacity as members of the body of Christ, and generally not also in their secular capacities as individuals holding particular secular jobs, offices, or professional positions. Rom. 12:4-5; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:1-6.

¹ The hotline number is (800) 552-7096 for in-state callers and (804) 786-8536 for out-of-state callers.

The Church desires to see that children are protected against child abuse and neglect.

The Church recognizes that, in God's plan as revealed in Scripture, parents have the primary and preeminent responsibility and authority for protection of their children.

The Church desires that the Church and those acting under its authority faithfully comply with their obligations under the Scriptures and under the laws of civil society (provided they are not contrary to the commands of Scripture).

The Church desires that the Church and those acting under its authority be aware of and understand their obligations under applicable laws regarding the reporting of child abuse and neglect, in order to protect children and to prevent potential misunderstandings about those laws from causing a report to be made or not made in error.

Policy

1. Church-related Activities. Whenever, in the context of Church-related activities, a Church member comes into possession of information that (i) suggests that a child may be an abused or neglected child, or (ii) causes the member to conclude that it may be appropriate to make a report to the civil authorities regarding possible child abuse or neglect, the member shall immediately contact an Elder of the Church who serves as a Pastor or, if no appropriate Pastor is available, another Elder, to disclose the information that suggests the possibility of abuse or neglect.

2. Church-related Relationships. Whenever, in the context of Church-related relationships but outside the scope of Church-related activities, a Church member comes into possession of information that (i) suggests that another Church member may have committed child abuse or neglect, or (ii) causes the member to conclude that it may be appropriate to make a report to the civil authorities regarding possible child abuse or neglect by another Church member, the member shall immediately contact an Elder of the Church who serves as a Pastor or, if no appropriate Pastor is available, another Elder, to disclose the information that suggests the possibility of abuse or neglect.

3. *Consultation.* The Elder(s) contacted pursuant to paragraph 1 or 2 above will consult with the other Elders and (if appropriate) the Church's legal counsel to help determine whether a report must or should be made to appropriate civil authorities in light of the applicable laws, biblical standards, and the relevant facts.

4. *Imminent Danger.* Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, in any instance covered by paragraph 1 or 2 above in which such member personally witnesses an act of abuse or in good faith believes that a child is in imminent danger, the member should immediately take appropriate actions (including if necessary contacting law enforcement or other civil authorities) to protect the child from significant injury, before the member attempts to contact an Elder. In the absence of such imminent danger, the steps set forth in paragraph 3 above should be followed first to assist the Elders and the member in determining promptly whether a report should or must be made to appropriate civil authorities.

5. *Notification of Status.* Any Church member who believes himself or herself to be a mandatory reporter of child abuse or neglect in the context of Church-related activities or relationships shall notify the Elders of that fact promptly upon becoming a member or a mandatory reporter.

6. *Responsibility.* At all times, each person is ultimately and solely responsible for his or her own compliance with any applicable laws.

Emergency Action Plan

First Aid

Although we strive to maintain the safest environment possible, it is known that the nature of children's activities occasionally leads to accidents. A first aid kit is accessible in the children's areas per the discretion of the Winchester Baptist Church leadership team.

It is the policy of Winchester Baptist Church to first notify the child's parents in the event of a medical incident. In the event that the parents are not immediately available, childcare workers will administer appropriate treatment measures such as applying pressure or a bandage to a bleeding wound. No pharmacological treatment, oral or topical, will be administered. Life threatening situations will, of course, be handled as emergencies with appropriate treatment measures being immediately

instituted. 911 and parents will be notified immediately. Winchester will not be responsible for any “Good Samaritan” assistance offered by any of its members.

Fire

In the event of a fire, personnel have been trained to remain calm, count all children in the room and lead the children out of the room in an organized, quick fashion.

Power Outage

If a power outage were to occur, children will be entertained and kept secure until their parents arrive.

Tornadoes, Storms, and Severe Weather

Children will be calmly escorted to an enclosed part of the building, such as an inside hallway or the lowest section of the building. They will be taught how to sit with their back against the wall, knees tucked under their chins, arms wrapped around the knees, and head bent down. All children will be accounted for, and efforts will be made to calm and entertain the children.

Earthquakes

Personnel have been taught to keep children away from heavy hanging objects, tall or heavy furniture, ruptured hot water heaters, gas lines, flammable liquids, and electrical wires. Children will be gathered under a supported doorway or sturdy table and kept calm and secure.