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**CHILD PROTECTION  
POLICIES**

Revised: August 1, 2023

# CONTENTS

General Purpose Statement.....	3
Definitions.....	3
Family Ministry Contact List.....	3
Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse.....	4
Reporting Mechanism for Staff and Servant Leaders.....	5
Selection of Workers.....	6
Training.....	7
Two Adult Rule.....	7
Policy for Managing Risk When One Staff Member or Servant Leader is Alone with One Youth.....	7
Child or Teenage Volunteers.....	8
Check In / Check Out.....	8
Missing Child.....	8
Endangered Child.....	9
Health Policy.....	9
Discipline Policy.....	9
Restroom/Diaper Changing Guidelines.....	10
Accidental Injuries to Children.....	10
Policy Governing Electronic Communication between Staff or Servant Leaders and Youth.....	10
Policy Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Physical Contact.....	11
Policy Defining Appropriate and Inappropriate Verbal Contact.....	11
Gift Giving Policy.....	12
Policy Prohibiting the Abuse or Mistreatment Of One Youth by Another Youth.....	12
Investigative Statement.....	13

THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
IN THIS DOCUMENT WERE  
CREATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH



## GENERAL PURPOSE STATEMENT

Rush Creek seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices and procedures, our goal is to protect the children and youth of Rush Creek from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

## DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the term "child," "children," or "minor" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

## FAMILY MINISTRIES CONTACT LIST

For the purposes of reporting a safety issue or concern, or inquiring on this policy, the following list should be contacted in the following order:

### FIRST CONTACT: MINISTRY LEADERS *For safety matters, this contact is mandatory*

#### Green Oaks Campus:

- Kids Ministry: Lauren Van Hoy (817) 468-7729 xt. 322
- Student Pastor: DeeJay Whiting (817) 468-7729 xt. 234

#### Mansfield West Campus:

- Kids Ministry: Misty Nailon (817) 468-7729 xt. 315
- Student Pastor: Ryan Higgs (817) 468-7729 xt. 252

#### Mira Lagos Campus:

- Kids Ministry: Lauren Sudberry (817) 468-7729 xt. 314
- Student Pastor: Kade Corley (817) 468-7729

#### Midlothian Campus:

- Kids Ministry: Jennifer Estoll (817) 468-7729
- Student Pastor: Will Franklin (817) 468-7729

#### Arlington Park Campus:

- Kids Ministry: Faith Baylor (817) 468-7729
- Weekday Contact
- Green Oaks POTC Director: Erin Taylor (817) 468-7729
- Mira Lagos POTC Director: Jenny Knight (817) 468-7729
- Childcare Hours Contact
- Childcare Director: Sarah Stubblefield (817) 468-7729 xt.331

### SECOND CONTACT: SUPERVISORS *Ministry leaders will contact supervisors*

Green Oaks Campus: Curt Hale

Mansfield West Campus: MW Campus Pastor: Scott Oldenburgh

Mira Lagos Campus: ML Campus Pastor: Jeremiah Sarvis

Midlothian Campus: MD Campus Pastor: John Simmons

Arlington Park Campus: AP Campus Pastor: Bradley Barksdale

Handley Hope Center: Shelly Ramsey

### THIRD CONTACT: LEAD TEAM *For safety matters, this contact is made at supervisor discretion*

## RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action), which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**- any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**- emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE**- any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and viewing pornography.
- **NEGLECT**- depriving a child of his/her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Persons working with children may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Rush Creek becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to their ministry leader for further action including reporting to authorities as mandated by Texas state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Rush Creek or during our sponsored programs and activities, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. We will comply with Texas state law (Texas Family Code, Chapter 261.261.101) that requires professionals to make a verbal report within 48 hours.<sup>1</sup>
3. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
4. GuideOne Insurance will be notified, and we will complete an Incident Report.
5. We will fully cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position with children and youth.
7. Jeff Kirkpatrick will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

In order to follow Texas state mandatory requirements, staff and servant leaders will be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. Staff and servant leaders will:

1. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse;
2. Know and follow Rush Creek policies and procedures that protect youth against abuse;
3. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by Texas mandated reporter laws; and...
4. Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

Please read the below statement. If you agree please sign and date:

**I have read and understand that I am legally and ethically required to report any incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the leadership of Rush Creek and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.**

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

<sup>1</sup> Verbal reports should be made to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: 1-800-252-5400

## Reporting Mechanism for Staff and Servant Leaders

While we hope that our staff and partners feel that they can openly communicate any concerns, complaints, or grievances directly to someone in the organization, we understand that doing so can often be difficult. Because it is important to us that everyone be able to share their concerns, we provide the following mechanisms through which you can make an anonymous report:

1. The Rush Creek Child Safety Hotline you can reach by calling 817-527-5250.
2. An online form you can find and submit at [rushcreek.org/childsafety](http://rushcreek.org/childsafety)

Please keep in mind that our ability to respond quickly and adequately may be affected if the information provided is limited. However, we are committed to responding to all anonymous concerns to the extent possible.

## Confidentiality of Reports

Rush Creek Church will protect the confidentiality of anyone who reports allegations or disclosures of abuse, or other violations of the law or policy to the extent possible under law. Legal and civil authorities (police, child or adult protective services) may require confidential information in order to investigate any report of illegal conduct but this does not eliminate the requirement to maintain confidentiality within the organization and its staff, servant leaders, and children.

## Follow-Up with Individuals who Report Concerns or Complaints

Rush Creek Church is committed to creating a safe environment for our staff, servant leaders, and especially our children and their parent/guardians. For that reason, we will treat every concern or complaint with the utmost seriousness and provide a timely, thorough, and objective response in every instance. When an individual shares a concern or complaint:

1. They will be given the time and attention necessary to allow them to share their thoughts in person.
2. They will be thanked for sharing their concerns and for contributing to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for everyone.
3. They will be advised that their concern is being taken seriously and that action will be taken.
4. They will be assured that they have done the right thing by reporting and that their communication is valued.
5. They will be informed, in general statements, of the steps that Rush Creek Church will take in addressing the matter.
6. They will be given contact information for someone in Rush Creek leadership with whom they can contact should they become aware of additional information.
7. They will be provided with regular updates of how the process is advancing.
8. Rush Creek Church will protect them from any form of retaliation.

## **SELECTION OF WORKERS**

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

### **A. SIX MONTH RULE**

No worker will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until he/she has been involved<sup>2</sup> with Rush Creek for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Please note the six-month rule may be suspended if the following three criteria are met:

1. A member of the family ministry staff interviews the applicant.
2. A reference from a former church is received and documented by Rush Creek.
3. A supervisor approves the suspension of the six-month rule on a case-by-case basis.

### **B. APPLICATION**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application supplied by Rush Creek. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliations, reference and employment information, as well as a disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Rush Creek.

### **C. PERSONAL INTERVIEW**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview with behaviorally-based questions may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. Rush Creek reserves the right to turn away any potential worker at our discretion.

### **D. REFERENCE CHECKS**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least three provided references will be checked. These references will be referred to as "character witnesses" and they will include a mixture of personal and professional relationships. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Rush Creek.

### **E. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK**

A local, county, statewide, and national criminal background check, as well as a National Sex Offender Registry check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who serve children in any capacity during Rush Creek programming;
- Those who will be involved with Preschool on the Creek;
- Those involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved with one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children such as children's ministry hospitality team members and vehicle drivers.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing Rush Creek to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he/she will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by Rush Creek on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions of an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Rush Creek.

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<sup>2</sup> Demonstrated participation or attendance in a ministry of Rush Creek

## **TRAINING**

Rush Creek will provide training on this child protection policy to all new persons working with children and will provide opportunities for additional training opportunities on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

First-time servant leaders will be trained in the following child-safety topics:

- Facts about sexual abuse
- Types of offenders
- How offenders operate
- How to prevent false allegations
- How to recognize red flags and boundary violations
- High risk circumstances for boundary violations
- Steps for how servant leaders should respond to boundary violations
- Definitions of abuse
- Mandated reporter requirements
- What to do if a child tells you about abuse
- Examples of child-to-child sexual abuse
- Characteristics of children more likely to act out sexually
- Characteristics of children more likely to be abused
- Identifying high risk activities and circumstances
- Steps for preventing sexual activity between children
- How to respond to incidents of sexual activity between children

Ongoing training will be provided to all servant leaders on a yearly basis in the following topics:

- How to prevent false allegations
- How to recognize red-flags and boundary violations
- Steps for how servant leaders should respond to boundary violations
- Mandated reporter requirements
- What to do if a child tells you about abuse
- Identifying high risk activities and circumstances
- How to respond to incidents of sexual activity between children

## **TWO ADULT RULE**

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some small groups may have only one adult worker in attendance during a teaching session. On those occurrences groups will either be held in large open rooms in the presence of other groups or in classrooms with open doors. Also in those instances, there should be no fewer than two children with an adult worker. We do not allow children to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

## **POLICY FOR MANAGING RISK WHEN ONE STAFF MEMBER OR SERVANT LEADER IS ALONE WITH ONE YOUTH**

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff and servant leaders should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS**

- When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others.
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes.
- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
- Inform other staff and servant leaders that you are alone with a child and ask them to randomly drop in.
- Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

## **CHILD VOLUNTEERS**

Rush Creek believes strongly in the next generation's ability to serve this faith community in a variety of roles. Because of that belief, we encourage children in the third grade or older to volunteer in the ministries and programs of Rush Creek. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Child workers will complete an application for service that includes references for service.
- Child workers will be under the supervision of an adult and never left alone with children.

## **CHECK IN/CHECK OUT**

### **CHECK IN PROCEDURES:**

Children from 8 weeks to 4th grade (for childcare up to 6th grade) in attendance should be checked into our electronic database system prior to being placed in our care (guests will have handwritten tags). These tags generate a unique number that changes every time a child is checked in.

For each child checked in, three (3) tags will be issued:

- Child Name Tag to be worn on chest or back while in our care
- Teacher Tag to be placed on check in tag roster sheet
- Parent/Guardian Pick Up Tag to be given and handed over at pick up

### **CHECK OUT PROCEDURES:**

Children will be released to someone 16 or older with the Parent/Guardian Tag that has the matching number.

In the event that a Parent/Guardian Tag is lost the following procedure will be followed:

- A Coach, Director, Children's Minister, or Childcare Coordinator will ask to see the Driver's License of the person picking up the child.
- The Driver's License number will be written down by one of the above people on the "I Have Lost My Tag Sheet".
- After both have been completed, the child will be released.

### **GUARDIAN TAG SECURITY PROCEDURES:**

- Someone 16 or older with a "Parent Pick Up" tag, or other approved identification, will be allowed in Children's Ministry areas.
- Ministry doors will be closed and locked fifteen (15) minutes after services have begun.
- Parents who insist on coming back in pairs may receive a hand-written Parent Pick Up tag at check in.

## **MISSING CHILD**

In the event that a child is discovered missing that has been checked into our ministry the following procedure will be followed:

- The worker who becomes aware a child is missing will communicate up their chain of command (coach, director, children's minister, childcare coordinator).
- The first worker above coaching level to know of the situation will communicate to the safety team over the radio to block exits from the building (they need to be specific about why, who they are looking for, and best location to their knowledge of where the child might be).
- Blocking exits from the building includes, but is not limited to:
  - Safety team members standing at all exterior exits and not allowing anyone to enter or leave the building.
  - Closing all doors to any Children's Ministry area.
  - Asking all children and parents to halt any dismissal process and leave all children in their current spaces until the situation is resolved.
- Designated Safety Team members will respond to the area the child is supposed to be.
- On-site Uniformed Officer will also be notified of the situation when applicable.
- Once the child is found and secure the Children's Ministry will communicate to the entire team to resume normal check out procedures.

In the event that a child is missing that has already been checked out or has not yet been checked into our ministry, the following procedures will be followed:

- Staff members of Rush Creek who become aware of the missing child must communicate the situation to the Safety Team immediately. The Safety Team will communicate over the radio to lock down the building (they need to be specific about why, who they are looking for, and best known location as to the whereabouts of the child).



- Lock Down the building includes, but is not limited to:
  - Safety team members standing at all exterior exits and not allowing anyone to enter or leave the building.
  - Closing all doors to any Children’s Ministry area.
  - Asking all children and parents to halt any dismissal procedures and leave all children in their current spaces until the situation is resolved.
- Designated Safety Team members will respond to the area the child is supposed to be.
- On-site Uniformed Officer will also be notified of the situation when applicable.
- Once the child is found and secure the Safety Team leader will communicate to the entire team to resume normal check out procedures.

## **ENDANGERED CHILD**

Parents who have concerns about a non-custodial parent or person picking up a child are urged to let Rush Creek staff know immediately. In these cases, parents might be asked to not leave their child in our care. This is for the safety of the other children in our care, the individual child, and all the Children’s Ministry and childcare workers.

If at any time a child under the care of Rush Creek is threatened by the presence of anyone in attendance, that person may be asked to leave by any staff member in accordance with law enforcement personnel or security officers.

## **HEALTH POLICY**

### **SICK CHILD POLICY**

For the protection of all children, parents are requested not to bring a child to church that appears to be ill. Upon recommendation of the Committee on Control of Infectious Diseases of the American Academy of Pediatrics, a child should not be taken out of the home when any of the following exists:

- Fever of 100.0°, currently or within the previous 24 hours
- Free of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours
- Any symptoms of a childhood disease such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Sore throat, croup, or any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo, pink eye, or other eye infections
- Non-clear mucus discharge from the nose

Children who develop an infectious disease following a session at Rush Creek will be encouraged to contact the church immediately. Children who are observed to be sick by our workers during church programming will be separated from the other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### **MEDICATIONS POLICY**

It is the policy of Rush Creek not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care during weekly ministry programs. Medications should be administered by caregivers at home.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with children’s ministry staff and supervisors to develop a plan of action.

For camps and other overnight programs, Rush Creek will abide by all medication regulations within the Youth Camp Act of the Texas Health and Safety Code, as well as the Texas Administrative Code. Guidelines in these codes include:

- Always storing medications in the original container
- Placing all medicines and related paraphernalia in a lockable cabinet or other secure location
- Always dispensing medication by an authorized health officer
- Never allowing children to self-administer.
- Medications needed for immediate use for life-threatening conditions may be carried by a camper or camp staffer if Rush Creek has a written statement of medical necessity from the prescribing doctor, or written approval from the on-duty health official.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of children in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by a staff member or servant leader will result in disciplinary action, up to & including termination of employment or volunteer service.

It is the policy of Rush Creek not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the family ministry staff if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **RESTROOM/DIAPER CHANGING GUIDELINES**

- Young children should utilize classroom bathroom facilities when available.
- If a bathroom is not available in the Children’s Ministry area, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom.
- Children should always go in a group. Workers should never take a child to the bathroom alone.
- The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.
- If a child takes longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child’s name.
- If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall open as he/she assists the child.

For babies and young toddlers who require diaper changes, the following guidelines must be followed.

- All diaper changes will be conducted by women over the age of 18 or female staff members of Rush Creek.
- Diaper changes should occur inside the nursery on changing tables placed in open areas in full view of other servant leaders working in the room.
- Diaper changes will only occur when two adults are present.
- After a new diaper has been put on, a sticker will be placed on the diaper notifying the parent that a change has occurred.
- Parents will be notified by staff if anything is observed to be out of the ordinary or concerning while changing the infant’s diaper.
- The Children’s Ministry staff of Rush Creek will know and follow all licensing requirements listed in the Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

## **ACCIDENTAL INJURIES TO CHILDREN**

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child’s parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to campus supervisors and volunteer medical teams. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed for injury cases requiring treatment by a medical professional.

## **POLICY GOVERNING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STAFF OR SERVANT LEADERS & CHILDREN**

Any **private** electronic communication between staff or servant leaders and children in any form, including texts, emails, and social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or any instant message platform is prohibited.

All communication between staff or servant leaders and children must be transparent. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

### **APPROPRIATE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

- Sending and replying to emails, texts, or messages from children **ONLY** when copying in a supervisor, parent, or trusted third party such as another servant leader or student ministry staff member
- Communicating through “organization group pages” on Facebook or other approved public forums

### **INAPPROPRIATE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

- Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating comments
- Sexually-oriented conversations
- Private messages between staff or servant leaders with children
- Posting inappropriate comments on pictures

\*Note: In order to influence and model good behavior on social media, encourage students, and “meet them where they are,” staff and servant leaders will be allowed to “friend” or “follow” children over the age of 14 on social media sites. However, these sites must not be used to private message or post inappropriate comments to children at any time.

In addition, these guidelines will be provided to all children and their parents so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from staff and servant leaders.

**POLICY DEFINING APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Rush Creek’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children and servant leaders. Rush Creek encourages appropriate physical contact with children and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or servant leaders toward children in Rush Creek programming will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Rush Creek policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include:

<b>APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS</b>	<b>INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Side hugs</li><li>▪ Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs</li><li>▪ Pats on the shoulder or back</li><li>▪ Handshakes</li><li>▪ High-fives, fist bumps, hand-slapping</li><li>▪ Pats on the head (when culturally appropriate)</li><li>▪ Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li><li>▪ Arms around shoulders</li><li>▪ Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Full-frontal hugs</li><li>▪ Kisses</li><li>▪ Showing affection in an isolated area</li><li>▪ Lap sitting (for children 3 and over)</li><li>▪ Wrestling</li><li>▪ Piggyback rides</li><li>▪ Tickling</li><li>▪ Any type of massage given by or to a child</li><li>▪ Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child, staff, or servant leader</li><li>▪ Compliments relating to physique or body development</li><li>▪ Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li></ul>

**POLICY DEFINING APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE VERBAL CONTACT**

Staff and servant leaders are prohibited from speaking to children in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Staff and servant leaders must not initiate sexually-oriented conversations with children. Staff and servant leaders are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with children.\*

Rush Creek’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions include:

<b>APPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS</b>	<b>INAPPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Positive reinforcement</li><li>▪ Appropriate jokes</li><li>▪ Encouragement</li><li>▪ Praise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Name-calling</li><li>▪ Discussing sexual encounters</li><li>▪ Secrets</li><li>▪ Cursing</li><li>▪ Off-color or sexual jokes</li><li>▪ Shaming</li><li>▪ Belittling</li><li>▪ Derogatory remarks</li><li>▪ Harsh language intended to frighten, threaten, or humiliate children</li><li>▪ Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family</li></ul>

\*There will be times when it is appropriate to teach children about God’s Biblical design for sex and personal purity. In every

instance this subject is covered, children and parents will be allowed to opt out of the discussion. At no time should staff or servant leaders speak explicitly about their own sexual history, or give details about specific sexual encounters.

## **GIFT GIVING POLICY**

Offenders routinely groom children by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the child. They might instruct the child to keep the gifts a secret, which then encourages keeping other bigger or more harmful secrets from trusted adults.

For this reason, staff and servant leaders are not allowed to give gifts, including money, to children, except when the gift is authorized by a supervisor and given to all children (i.e., celebration of special events/holidays or group recognition). Employees and servant leaders are prohibited from giving gifts to individual children, unless directly related to the child's spiritual growth and approved by a ministry leader and the parent or guardian.

Group gifts to children may only be given under the following circumstances:

1. Gift requests must be submitted to a supervisor prior to being purchased.
2. The ministry leader will determine a cost limit regarding how much can be spent on a gift; and,
3. Parents of children must be notified about the gift item and why the children are receiving the gift.

For all questions regarding gifts, please contact your ministry supervisor.

## **POLICY PROHIBITING THE ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT OF ONE CHILD BY ANOTHER CHILD**

Rush Creek is committed to providing all children with a safe environment. Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child by another child.

In addition, Rush Creek will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

1. Physical bullying—when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
2. Verbal bullying—when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as belittling or calling another hurtful names.
3. Nonverbal or relational bullying—when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
4. Cyberbullying—the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs).

Cyberbullying can involve:

- a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
- b. Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
- c. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
- d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- e. Hazing—an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
- f. Sexualized bullying—when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposure of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all children, staff, and servant leaders.

## **INVESTIGATIVE STATEMENT**

Rush Creek cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or servant leader shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the church. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.

Please read the below statement. If you agree please sign and date:

**As a person entrusted with the care and safety of minors by Rush Creek, I will cooperate fully with any and all investigations. I understand that failure to do so may be grounds for termination.**

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

Please read the below statements. If you agree please sign and date:

**I have read and agree to comply with ALL of the policies of Rush Creek.**

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