

Minor Safety Policies

Rush Creek Church



Contents

Revised 6/23/2026

General Purpose Statement.....	3
Definitions.....	3
Family Ministry Contact List.....	3
Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse.....	4
Reporting Mechanism for Staff and Volunteers.....	6
Confidentiality of Reports	6
Follow-Up with Individuals Who Report Concerns or Complaints	6
Selection of Workers.....	7
Training.....	8
Two Adult Rule.....	9
Age Appropriate Supervisor.....	9
Policy for Managing Risk When One Staff Member or CREW Member is	
Alone with One Minor.....	9
Servant's Heart & Minor Staff.....	9
Check-In/Check-Out.....	10
Missing Minor.....	11
Endangered Minor.....	12
Infection Control.....	12
Medication Policy.....	12
Confidentiality of Medical Information.....	13
Camp & Overnight Retreat Supervision.....	13
Discipline Policy.....	14
Restroom/Diaper Changing Guidelines.....	14
Accidental Injuries to Minors.....	15
Policy Governing Electronic Communication Between Staff or	
CREW & Minors	15
Policy Defining Appropriate & Inappropriate Physical Contact.....	16
Nudity.....	16
Policy Defining Appropriate & Inappropriate Verbal Contact.....	16
Gift-Giving Policy.....	17
Policy Prohibiting the Abuse or Mistreatment of One Minor by	
Another Minor.....	18
Investigative Statement.....	19

General Purpose Statement

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

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the terms “child”, “children”, “kid”, “kids”, “minor”, or “minors” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The terms “infant”, “baby”, or “babies” include all persons between birth and twelve (12) months old. The term “toddler” is defined as a person between the ages of one (1) and three (3). Adults employed by Rush Creek Church are referred to as “pastor”, “minister”, “supervisor”, “staff”, “ministry staff”, or “ministerial staff”. The terms “volunteers”, “CREW”, or “CREW members” refer to adults eighteen (18) years old or older who volunteer to work with minors in the ministries of Rush Creek Church. The term “servant's heart” refers to minors under the age of eighteen (18) who serve in the ministries of Rush Creek Church. Individuals who have attended First Step Experience and signed the Partner Covenant agreement are assigned the term “Partner”.

Family Ministries Contact List

For the purpose of reporting a safety issue or concern, or inquiring about matters concerning this policy, the following list should be contacted in the following order:

First Contact: Ministry Leaders	Phone	Email
Green Oaks Campus:		
Kid's Ministry – Bridget Howard	(817)468-7729	bridgeth@rushcreek.org
Student Ministry – Zach Hinson	(817)468-7729	zachh@rushcreek.org
Mansfield West Campus:		
Kid's Ministry – Misty Nailon	(817)468-7729 xt.315	mistyn@rushcreek.org
Student Ministry – Ryan Higgs	(409)719-3352	ryanh@rushcreek.org
Mira Lagos Campus:		
Kid's Ministry – Emily Waldrop	(817)468-7729	emilyw@rushcreek.org
Student Ministry – Kade Corley	(817)468-7729 xt.359	kadec@rushcreek.org
Midlothian Campus:		
Kid's Ministry – Jennifer Estoll	(817)300-8665	jennifere@rushcreek.org
Student Ministry – Jake Howard	(501)554-6054	jakeh@rushcreek.org
Arlington Park Campus: Campus		
Pastor – Brad Barksdale	(817)456-4077	bradb@rushcreek.org
Kid's Ministry – Courtney Bowland	(817)468-7729	courtneyb@rushcreek.org
POTC Director		
Erin Taylor	(817)468-7729	erint@rushcreek.org
Childcare Coordinator		
Melba Martin	(817)468-7729	melbam@rushcreek.org
Family Minister		
Micheal Felker	(817) 468-7729	michealf@rushcreek.org

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 minor’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 minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE- emotional injury when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent bullying or teasing.

SEXUAL ABUSE- any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between a minor and another minor, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and viewing pornography.

NEGLECT- purposefully depriving a minor of his/her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE- any abuse administered under the guise of religion to harm a minor; abuse that occurs in a religious context; abuse perpetrated by a religious leader; or invocation of divine authority to manipulate a minor into meeting the needs of an abuser.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of minors at Rush Creek Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect, he/she should report the abuse immediately to ministry staff 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 Church or during our sponsored programs and activities, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the minor will be notified.
2. Rush Creek Church will comply with Texas Mandated Reporter Law (Texas Family Code, Chapter 261.101) that reports be made to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
3. The staff member or CREW member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with minors pending an investigation. A minor alleged to be the perpetrator of abuse or misconduct will be restricted from ministry participation pending an investigation.
4. Philadelphia Insurance will be notified, and an incident report will be completed.
5. Rush Creek Church will fully cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state and local authorities.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position serving or in proximity to minors at Rush Creek Church.
7. Executive Director Mike Wiltz or his designate will serve as spokesman to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. If Executive Director Mike Wiltz is unable to fulfill his duty for any reason, another spokesman shall be chosen by the Central Leadership Team. All other staff members and CREW should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. Rush Creek Church staff will offer continued support to survivors of abuse and their families including, but not limited to, the following methods:
 - a. Assigning a pastor or minister to offer ongoing support to the survivor of child abuse and family members through typical pastoral care such as listening, affirming, prayer, etc.
 - b. Offering financial assistance and guidance in connecting the survivor of child abuse with a professional mental health practitioner with experience treating victims of abuse and family members.
 - c. Offering public support for the survivor of abuse and his/her family by making a public statement in support of survivors of abuse, denouncing child abuse of any kind, and urging support from the community.
9. Rush Creek Church believes it is important to also treat all accused abusers with dignity and support, staying mindful that all accusations are *alleged crimes* until proven true in a court of law. Persons accused of abuse will be provided ongoing, pastoral support. If necessary, a *Limited Access Agreement* may be created to formalize expectations and boundaries for the accused while on church property or among church family.

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

1. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and spiritual abuse;
2. Know and follow Rush Creek Church policies and procedures that protect minors, staff, and CREW from abuse;
3. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by Texas mandated reporter laws; and

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4. Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

The following information should be collected and conveyed when making a report concerning a suspicion of minor abuse to the Texas Department of Child Protective Services:

1. Name of minor
2. Name of parents and siblings living in the minor's home
3. Brief description of minor
4. Where the minor can be located
5. Name of alleged abuser
6. Where the alleged abuser can be located
7. A complete, honest account of what was observed that led to suspicion of minor abuse

Please note that if some of the above information is unknown, a report should still be filed with the Texas Department of Child Protective Services with all known information regarding the minor, the alleged abuser, and the circumstances that led to the suspicion of abuse.

Reporting Mechanisms for Staff, Leaders, and Church Family

While we hope that our staff, partners, and guests feel that they can openly communicate directly to someone in the organization about any suspicions, observations, or disclosures of abuse that might have occurred at a Rush Creek Church on or off campus ministry event, 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 an online form found at rushcreek.org/child-safety through which anyone can make an anonymous report.

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 Rush Creek Church and its staff, CREW, and minors.

Follow-Up with Individuals Who Report Concerns or Complaints

Rush Creek Church is committed to creating a safe environment for our staff, CREW, and especially our minors and their parents/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. The individual will be given the time and attention necessary to share his/her thoughts in person.
2. The individual will be thanked for sharing his/her concerns and for contributing to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for everyone.
3. The individual will be advised that his/her concern is being taken seriously and that action will be taken.
4. The individual will be assured that he/she has done the right thing by reporting and that his/her communication is valued.
5. The individual will be informed, in general statements, of the steps Rush Creek Church will take in addressing the matter.
6. The individual will be given contact information for someone on staff with whom he/she can contact should he/she become aware of additional information.
7. The individual will be provided with general updates upon request.
8. Rush Creek Church will protect him/her, to the best of their ability, from any form of retaliation.

Selection of Workers

All staff and all persons over the age of eighteen (18) who desire to work with minors 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 (see note) with Rush Creek Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our staff and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with minors. Please note the six-month rule may be suspended if the following three (3) criteria are met:

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

B. Application

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

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 Church reserves the right to turn away any potential worker for any reason.

D. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with minors, 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. Background Checks

A local, county, statewide, and national criminal background check, as well as a National Sex Offender Registry check is required for all pastors, ministers, directors, and staff (regardless of position) of Rush Creek Church and for the following categories of CREW member:

- Those eighteen (18) years and older who serve minors in any capacity during Rush Creek Church programming;
- Those employed by Preschool on the Creek.
- Those involved in overnight activities with minors
- Those who counsel minors
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors; and
- Those having occasional contact with minors such as Hope Ranch CREW, members of the kids' hospitality CREW, safety CREW, and vehicle drivers.

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

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with minors will be determined by Rush Creek Church on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions of an offense involving minors and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary with Rush Creek Church's mission and vision will preclude someone from being permitted to work with minors. 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 Church administrative offices.

Training

Rush Creek Church will provide training on this minor protection policy to all new persons working with minors and will provide opportunities for child abuse prevention training on a bi-annual basis. All staff and CREW are required to participate in training provided by Rush Creek Church on the following topics:

- The scope of the issue
- Types of offenders
- How offenders operate
- How to prevent false allegations

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- How to recognize red-flag behaviors and boundary violations
 - High-risk opportunities for boundary violations
 - Steps ministry leaders should take to respond to boundary violations
 - Definitions of abuse
 - Mandated reporter requirements
 - What to do if a child discloses abuse
 - Examples of child-to-child sexual abuse
 - Characteristics of minors more likely to act out sexually
 - Characteristics of minors more likely to be abused
 - Steps for preventing sexual activity between minors
 - How to respond to incidents of sexual activity between minors

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult staff or CREW be in attendance at all times when minors are being supervised in our programs and activities. Some small groups may have only one adult staff or CREW 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 or open half-doors. Also in those instances, there should be no fewer than two minors with an adult staff or CREW and hallways should have adults patrolling to ensure every staff member and CREW is both observable and interruptible. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in an approved counseling situation.

Age-Appropriate Supervisor

Adult supervisors shall be a minimum of twenty-one (21) years of age when supervising or chaperoning high school-aged students at any Rush Creek Church activity or programming event. All adult supervisors shall be a minimum of eighteen (18) years of age when supervising or chaperoning middle school students or younger children at any Rush Creek Church child or student activity or programming event.

Policy for Managing Risk When One Staff Member or CREW Member is Alone with One Minor

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

- When meeting one-on-one with a minor, 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 CREW members that you are alone with a minor and ask them to randomly drop in.

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- 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.

Servant's Heart & Minor Staff

Rush Creek Church believes strongly in giving minors the opportunity to serve our church family in a variety of roles. Whenever an individual under the age of eighteen (18) serves in Rush Creek Church programs and ministries involving minors, the following steps shall be taken for proper screening:

- Minors will complete a training and sign a covenant to begin serving.
- Minors will remain under the supervision of a fully-screened adult while serving and never alone with other minors.

Check-In/Check-Out

In order to maintain secure ministry areas, Rush Creek Church requires all minors in fourth grade and under to participate in check-in/check-out procedures¹.

Check-In Procedures

- The minor must be accompanied by an adult into secure ministry areas where check-in kiosks are located. There, the adult must enter a phone number into the provided computers and indicate his/her children are present. If help is needed, CREW members are located at check-in desks for assistance.
- Minors may check themselves in at any kiosk that is outside a secure ministry area. They must give the parent tag to the parent or guardian who accompanied them to church. Minors 4th grade and under MAY NOT check themselves out. The parent or guardian who has the matching tag is the only person who may check the minor out.
- At check-in, three tags are printed for every minor: two name tags and a pick-up tag. The name tags feature the minor's name and an alphanumeric code. The pick-up tag features a matching alphanumeric code.
- One name tag should be worn by the minor at all times during ministry programming. The other name tag should be given to the CREW member in the minor's classroom.
- The pick-up tag is given to the parent or guardian to bring back for check-out procedures.
- In the event the check-in computers do not function, temporary handmade tags will be distributed with matching alphanumeric codes for name tag and pick-up tag.

Check-Out Procedures

- Upon return, only adults with pick-up tags may enter secure ministry areas.

¹ Minors in fifth grade and older will check in at secure ministry areas where check-in kiosks are located. They must enter their phone number into the provided computers and indicate if they are present. They will be printed a name tag to wear during ministry programming. They do not have to check out with a guardian.

- When an adult enters a minor's classroom, a staff member or CREW member will check the pick-up tag of the individual wanting to retrieve the minor and make sure that the alphanumeric code matches the alphanumeric code on the minor's name tag.
- If the codes match, the teacher, staff member, or CREW member must take the minor's name tag and the adult's pick-up tag and dispose of them properly.
- At times, adults may leave with a pick-up tag if more than two children must be picked up using the tag. In those instances, alphanumeric codes on corresponding tags will be visually verified and adults will be allowed to leave the room with the pick-up tag.
- If adult leaves with pick-up tag because there are multiple minors, the tag must be destroyed once the last minor in the family has been picked up.

Lost Name Tags/Pick Up Tags

If an adult loses a pick-up tag, he or she must return to a manned check-in station, complete a Lost Tag Form, show a photo ID and enter the phone number used at check-in to print a duplicate tag. The ID must match the info on the form. The tag and the Lost Tag Form will be walked by a staff member or director to the minor's classroom for pick up. The Lost Tag Form will be retained by staff for 6 months. If the duplicate tag has "CHECK OUT ALERT" in the medical section, adult must be stopped from entry and a staff member called. Staff will check the minor's file for any current custody issues and custodial parent will be called for pick up.

Special Events Check-In/Check-Out

Some special events, such as Best Weekend Ever, may require different check-in/check-out procedures in order to accommodate a larger number of participants. In these situations, secure check-in/check-out will be accomplished through online event registration, the creation of an approved adult pick-up list, and verification of adults through photo ID checks at secure pick-up locations.

Missing Minor

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

- The CREW member who becomes aware a minor is missing will communicate to the appropriate ministry staff member. -That staff member will immediately begin collecting and dispersing identifying characteristics of the child to staff and Safety CREW members and security officers.
- The staff member will communicate to the Safety CREW members to lock down appropriate children's ministry areas (they need to be specific about why, who they are looking for, and best location to their knowledge of where the minor might be). Check-out procedures may be temporarily halted at this time.
- Designated Safety CREW members and security officers will respond to the area the minor is supposed to be located. Other Safety CREW members, security officers, and staff may need to be dispatched to locations inside and outside the building.
- Once the minor has been located and his/her safety ensured, the family ministry staff will communicate to the entire CREW team to resume normal check-out procedures.

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

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- Designated Safety CREW members and security officers will respond to the area the minor is supposed to be located. Other Safety CREW members, security officers, and staff may need to be dispatched to locations inside and outside the building.
 - Once the minor is found and secure the Safety CREW leader will communicate to the entire team to resume normal ministry procedures.

In the event a missing minor is not located after a reasonable amount of time, law enforcement will be called.

Endangered Minor

Parents or guardians who are concerned that a non-custodial parent or person may pose a threat to a minor during ministry programming are urged to let Rush Creek Church staff know immediately. In these cases, guardians may be asked not to leave the endangered minor in our care. This is for the safety of the other minors in our care, the individual minor, and all the family ministry staff and CREW members.

In the event that an endangered minor does participate in programs hosted by Rush Creek Church, a picture will be requested of the person who poses the threat to the child. That picture will be disseminated to Safety CREW members and security officers.

If, at any time, a minor under the care of Rush Creek Church is threatened by the presence of anyone in attendance, that person may be asked to leave by any staff member in accordance with Safety CREW members or security officers.

Infection Control

We ask minors and any staff or CREW who have had any of the below symptoms in the past twenty-four (24) hours to stay home from Rush Creek Church ministries until symptoms resolve without medication to relieve symptom(s).

- Fever at or over 100.0°, currently or within the previous 24 hours
- Rash
- Pink Eye
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting

We ask minors who have taken any fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen in the past twenty-four (24) hours to stay home until they are fever-free without the use of medication for 24 hours.

Parents or guardians of minors who develop an infectious disease following a session at Rush Creek Church will be encouraged to contact the church immediately. Minors who are observed to be sick by our staff or a CREW member during church programming will be separated from the other minors and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the minor be picked up for the day.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of Rush Creek Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the minors 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 or guardians of minors with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Guardians of such minors should address the conditions and treatment requirements with family ministry staff to develop a plan of action.

Medication distribution (prescription, over the counter, and essential oils) for overnight activities will follow strict guidelines communicated to parents before the event. Those guidelines include, but are not limited to, filling out a medical information form detailing proper dosage times and amount, mandatory collection and dispensing of all medicines by the acting event licensed medical professional, and a requirement of permission from a parent or guardian for the use of basic medicines (Tylenol, Benadryl, etc.) included in basic First Aid supplies.

Confidentiality of Medical Information

At Rush Creek Church, we are committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all medical information shared with us. We collect medical information solely for specific purposes, such as emergency contact information, participation in church-sponsored activities, and providing pastoral care. This information is stored securely, and access is restricted to authorized personnel only. We do not share medical information with third parties without explicit consent, except as required by law or necessary to protect health and safety. In emergencies, we may disclose information to medical personnel to provide appropriate care.

Camp & Overnight Retreat Supervision

These additional guidelines will be followed for all camps and retreats in which Rush Creek Church participates:

- Changing clothes in common areas is prohibited for all adults. Adults should change in bathrooms and/or shower stalls. Minors, staff, and CREW members must not share stalls while changing or showering.
- When possible, adults and minors must use separate changing/shower/restroom areas.
- Dress code should be followed at all times outside of the sleeping areas. Further information regarding dress code for all camps and overnight retreats will be provided before each event.
- When separate adult and minor changing/shower areas are not available, a schedule will be made and followed to avoid adults and minors being in the showers at the same time.
- Each minor must have his/her own bed. Minors may not share a bed. Boys bunk with boys. Girls bunk with girls.
- Minors are restricted from entering the opposite sex's sleeping areas or bathroom facilities.

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- The 2:1 rule should be followed at all times. At least two (2) minors should be with an adult, or two (2) unrelated adults may accompany a minor. Minors must not be alone with adults at any time while participating in camps or overnight activities (examples include traveling to/from activities, in the clinic/nurse station, and during decision counseling).

Discipline Policy

Rush Creek Church will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of minors in its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by a staff member or CREW member will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.

It is the policy of Rush Creek Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents or guardians have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of minors. Staff and CREW members should consult with the appropriate ministry staff if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom / Diaper Changing Guidelines

The following guidelines only apply to minors in sixth grade or younger, or fifth grade and under at the Midlothian Campus. Young minors should utilize classroom bathroom facilities when available.

- If a bathroom is not available in the kids' ministry area, staff or CREW members should escort a group of minors to the closest bathroom.
- Minors should always go in a group. Staff members and CREW members should never take a minor to the bathroom alone.
- The staff member or CREW member should check the bathroom first to make sure it is empty, and then allow the minors inside. The staff member or CREW member should then remain outside the bathroom door to escort the minors back to the classroom when all have finished.
- If a minor takes longer than seems necessary, the staff member or CREW member should open the bathroom door and call the minor's name.
- If a minor requires assistance, the staff member or CREW member should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall open as he/she assists the minor, ensuring that a second adult is present.

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

- All diaper changes will be conducted by adult females over the age of eighteen (18).
- Diaper changes should occur inside the nursery area on changing tables placed in open areas in full view of other staff or CREW members working in the room.
- Diaper changes will occur only when two adults are present.
- After a new diaper has been put on, a sticker will be placed on the diaper notifying the parent/guardian that a change has occurred.
- Parents/guardians will be notified by Rush Creek Church staff if anything is observed to be out of the ordinary or concerning while changing the infant's diaper.

Accidental Injuries to Minors

In the event that a minor is injured while under the care of Rush Creek Church, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises staff or CREW will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, cold compresses, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the minor's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the minor is picked up from our care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to staff and medical CREW members. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Parents or guardians will be called immediately if a minor suffers a head injury of any kind.
- Once the minor has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.
 - All accident reports will be filed in a secure location at the administrative offices of Rush Creek Church.

Policy Governing Electronic Communication between Staff or CREW & Minors

Any private electronic communication between staff or CREW members and minors in any form, including texts, emails, and social media sites such as TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, or any instant message platform is prohibited.

All communication between staff or CREW members and minors must be transparent. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

Appropriate Electronic Communication	Inappropriate Electronic Communication
• Sending and replying to emails, texts, or messages from minors ONLY when copying in a supervisor, parent/guardian, or trusted third party such as another CREW member or family ministry staff member • Communicating through "organization group pages" on Facebook or other approved public forums	• Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating comments • Sexually-oriented conversations • Private messages between staff or CREW with minors • Posting inappropriate comments on social media posts • Private online voice-chatting between an adult and minor while gaming

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

Policy Defining Appropriate & Inappropriate Physical Contact

Rush Creek Church's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting minors, staff, and CREW members. Rush Creek Church encourages appropriate physical contact with

minors and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or CREW members toward minors in Rush Creek Church programming will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and volunteer service.

Rush Creek Church policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
• Side-hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives, fist bumps, hand-slapping • Pats on the head (when culturally appropriate) • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young minors in escorting situations)	• Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in an isolated location out of line-of-sight • Lap-sitting (for minors age 3 and over) • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Any type of massage given by or to a minor • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the minor, staff, or CREW member

Staff or CREW members must not physically restrain a minor in their care, except when the safety of that minor or others is at risk.

Nudity

Rush Creek Church strictly prohibits any form of nudity or indecent exposure among minors, CREW members, and staff during its ministries and programs. Complete privacy must be ensured at all times for activities that involve nudity, such as showering at camp. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including exclusion from participation in ministry.

Policy Defining Appropriate & Inappropriate Verbal Contact

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

Staff and CREW members must not initiate sexually-oriented conversations with minors.² Staff and CREW members are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with minors.

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

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
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² There will be times when it is appropriate to teach minors about God's Biblical design for sex, sexual identity, and personal purity. In every instance this subject is covered, minors and parents or guardians will be allowed to opt out of the discussion. At no time should staff or CREW speak explicitly about their own sexual history or give details about specific sexual encounters.

• Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise	• Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory jokes • Harsh language intended to frighten, threaten, or humiliate minors • Derogatory remarks about the minor and his/her family

Gift-Giving Policy

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

For this reason, staff and CREW members are not allowed to give gifts, including money, to minors, except when the gift is authorized by a supervisor and given to all minors in a particular group (i.e., celebration of special events/holidays or group recognition). Staff and CREW members are prohibited from giving gifts to individual minors, unless directly related to the minor's spiritual growth and approved by a staff member or the parent/guardian.

For all questions regarding gifts, please contact the appropriate staff member.

Policy Prohibiting the Abuse or Mistreatment of One Minor by Another Minor

Rush Creek Church is committed to providing all minors with a safe environment. Our church family will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one minor by another minor. In addition, Rush Creek Church 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/or 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.
5. 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.
6. 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. The consequences of bullying behavior or abuse will result in disciplinary action, up to and including exclusion from participation in ministry.

Investigative Statement

Rush Creek Church cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or CREW 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 Church, I will cooperate fully with any and all investigations. I understand that failure to do so may be grounds for termination or removal from ministry.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Please read the below statements. 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 Church and the Texas Department of Child Protective Services. Additionally, I have read and agree to comply with ALL of the minor safety policies of Rush Creek Church.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____jj

Printed Name: _____