

Safety Policy for Children's & Student Ministry Volunteers



GRACE CHAPEL

September 2021

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I. Purpose

Grace Chapel, Inc. is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and students who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy reflects our commitment to creating and preserving a safe place where all who come are protected so they can experience the love of God through healthy relationships with others.

These procedures must be adhered to by all pastors, staff, ministry leaders, teachers, assistants, and volunteers. Before anyone serves here at Grace Chapel with children or students, he or she must agree to uphold these procedures by completing the volunteer application attached ([Appendix E](#)) and signing the Authorization and Release of Liability ([Appendix D](#)).

II. Screening Procedures

Screening procedures are to be used for all persons who work with children or students in the church on a regular basis, either in a paid or volunteer position. Others who have direct or unmonitored contact with children will also be screened*. This screening includes:

A. Three Month Rule

Ordinarily, we do not permit people to serve in children or students ministry until they have been attending Grace Chapel for at least three months. This gives a threshold of time for individuals to become better known and gives an opportunity to evaluate suitability for service. In some cases, length of time may be reduced based on a person's ability to provide positive character references from other students'-serving organizations and/or from our ministry leaders.

B. Volunteer Application and Interview

We require a volunteer service application ([Appendix E](#)) for all those serving in our children and student ministries. Along with this application, an interview is required with a Grace Chapel staff member or ministry leader. This is a time to review our church's policies and procedures regarding the supervision of children and students.

C. Reference Checks

Once the written application is completed, we may conduct reference checks as deemed necessary by the Grace Chapel staff. Volunteers should list prior service (preferably with children or students) and references from church members

*"Direct and unmonitored contact with children" means contact with a child when no other CORI cleared individual is present. A person having only the potential for incidental unsupervised contact with children in commonly used areas, such as hallways, when other adults are present shall not be considered to have the potential for direct and unmonitored contact with children.

These excluded areas do not include bathrooms and other isolated areas (not commonly utilized and separated by sight or sound from other CORI cleared adults that are accessible to children." (M/G/L/ c 71. 38R)

D. Background Checks

Staff will take reasonable steps, where applicable, to inquire into the background of potential employees, ministry leaders and volunteers. CORI/SORI checks will be conducted as authorized by the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB). All employment applicants or volunteers who would have the potential for "direct and unmonitored contact with children" while serving at or with Grace Chapel will be notified that a CORI/SORI check will be conducted. If requested, the applicant will be provided with a copy of the CORI/SORI policy.

Examples of individuals who may have the potential for such contact include:

- Children's Ministry staff and volunteers
- Student Ministry staff and volunteers
- Individuals authorized to be present alone at Grace Chapel for the purpose of ministry (i.e., facility team members, office volunteers, hospitality team members, etc.)
- Individuals who have been issued keys for the facility
- Volunteer drivers of children and students for Grace Chapel sponsored events.

Church staff will endeavor to keep confidential all information obtained through the inquiries referred to in the Screening Procedures section B-D above including but not limited to information received in response to CORI and SORI checks, except where otherwise required by law. If the Church determines in good faith that it is required by law to report information obtained through such inquiries, then the Church will comply with the same.

III. Reporting of Suspected Abuse/Unauthorized Engagement

The church has a policy that requires anyone using the church facilities for any activity (sponsored by Grace Chapel or by an outside organization) to report to the Pastor or departmental contact (see chart below) or if during Sunday morning communication could include the campus pastor, and inhouse security, if it is suspected that a minor has been abused, neglected, or a target of unauthorized engagement on Grace Chapel properties or as a part of the ministry of Grace Chapel. Suspected incidences of self-harm are also cause for concern around abuse and should be reported. A written Abuse Incident Report should be submitted as soon as possible or within 24 hours ([Appendix B](#)). A child welfare definition of abuse is included in [Appendix A](#).

Grace Chapel directors and pastors are mandated reporters. If someone is being harmed, if someone is harming someone else, or if someone is self-harming, they are required to report any kind of harm to the Department of Children and Families.

A. People to Contact if a Child/Minor Abuse Incident Occurs

Role by Campus	Name	Phone Number
Central Office		
Pastor On Call (after reg hours)	Pastoral Staff	781-862-6499
Executive Pastor	Mark MacDonald	781-862-6499 x102

Pastor Central/NextGen Ministries Director of Human Resources	Ruthie Seiders Sharon Whitehead	781-862-6499 x110 781-862-6499 x128
Lexington Campus Campus Pastor Children's Ministry Director Elementary Children's Director Student Ministry Pastor Middle School Director Director of SHINE Ministry	Adam Rowe Patti Lake Dom Bronico Jon Kim TBA TBA	781-862-6499 x 781-862-6499 x138 781-862-6499 x173 781-862-6499 x492
Wilmington Campus Campus Pastor Children's Ministry Director High School Director Middle School Director	Tom VanAntwerp Angela Rogers Victor Matos Kate Fox-Fuller	781-862-6499 x141 781-862-6499 x131 781-862-6499 x137 781-862-6499 x137
Watertown Campus Campus Pastor Children's Ministry Director Student Ministry Director	Stephen Nyakairu TBA Megan Kenny	781-862-6499 x157 781-862-6499 x
East Lexington Campus Campus Pastor Children's Ministry Director Student Ministry Director	Tom Lee Sam Lee Akash Ahuja	781-862-6499 x174
Foxboro Campus Campus Pastor Children's Ministry Director Student Ministry Director	Tom Boisclair Rita MacKinnon Blaire Telford	781-862-6499 x179 781-862-6499 x180 781-862-6499 x177

IV. Christian Conduct

We expect our volunteers and staff to model behaviors consistent with the biblical truths we teach. For more information regarding what Grace Chapel believes please visit grace.org/WhoWeAre

V. Appropriate Physical Contact

We cannot be too careful in the area of sexual abuse. All staff and volunteers must be very cautious in order to avoid doing anything that could be interpreted as inappropriate touching. Never touch a child or student on or near any region that is considered private or personal, unless changing diapers or assisting Nursery/Preschool children in the bathroom.

VI. Supervision of Children & Younger Students (up through age 17)

A. Two Volunteer Rule

Except where impossible, two qualified volunteers must be present with children up through age 17. This means we avoid all situations where an adult may be alone with a

child or a group of children. Our philosophy is that we work with children and students in group settings at the church/group events with multiple adults present.

Further clarifications:

1. A high school student can be one of the two volunteers, but they should not serve alone with a second high school student. Staff may make exceptions to this guideline where they have expressly determined that particular individuals are suitable to serve as co- leaders.
2. All rooms will have open doors or windows to ensure visibility. In the unlikely event that there is only one volunteer in the room, the following procedures should be followed:
 - a. If you are the only adult in a classroom with a group of children, please keep the curtains, blinds, and classroom doors open.
 - b. If you are the only adult in the classroom and there is only one child attending, please join aneighboring class.

Middle and High School events are best to be scheduled as drop off and pick-up at the event by parents. No adult (staff or volunteer) should ever be alone in the car with a child or student that is not their own child.

B. Minimum Age to Serve

Volunteers shall be of sufficient age and maturity to work effectively with the children in their charge. Qualified volunteers in the nursery and other children's programs shall be at least fourteen years of age. Staff may make exceptions to this guideline where they have expressly determined that a particular individual is suitable to serve as a helper/assistant. Helpers/assistants do not count in the two-volunteer rule.

C. Children to Volunteer Ratios

To ensure safe and adequate care, the following ratios are recommended for scheduling (numbers are based on expected attendance and do not preclude the two-volunteer rule):

- Infants (birth through 12 months): 1 volunteer for every 1 to 2 children
- Toddlers (1-2 years old): 1 volunteer for every 4 to 6 children
- Preschoolers: 1 volunteer for every 6 to 8 children
- Elementary: 1 volunteer for every 8 to 10 children
- Middle School: 1 volunteer for every 5 to 6 students
- High School: 1 volunteer for every 7 to 8 students
- CCLE's
 - Middle School: 1 volunteer for every 4 students
 - High School: 1 volunteer for every 5 students
- Over nights
 - Middle: School: 1 volunteer for every 5 to 6 students
 - High School: 1 volunteer for every 7 to 8 students

D. Bathroom Safeguards

Ages (0-4 years old):

If a child needs to go to the bathroom, they must be escorted by one of the adult volunteers to the bathroom. They may never go to the bathroom alone. The bathroom door must be left open approx. 18 inches when an adult is assisting a potty-training child. If a child does not require assistance, instruct the child to leave the door slightly ajar. Children should never be taken to a closed restroom by only one adult.

Ages (Kindergarten-8th Grade*):

If a child needs to go to the bathroom, they must be escorted by a volunteer to the bathroom when the child is in kindergarten through third grade*. The volunteer should wait in the hallway and then walk back with the child. Volunteers should never enter a bathroom stall or single restroom with a child and close the door. "Group" trips to the bathroom and using the bathroom with multiple stalls is preferred.

*Fourth through Eighth graders are permitted to go without an escort at the teacher's discretion.

E. Discipline

The purpose of discipline with children and students is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect, and cooperation. No child or student shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting. Staff, leaders, and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs or give alternate choices. If a child or student is disruptive, a leader from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the Staff Director or the Coach. If neither is available, a parent should be contacted and brought to the room. Additional training on behavior management may be provided in departmental training.

F. Identification

Volunteers must wear ministry lanyards with name tags when serving. This helps identify them as part of our team, which is important in ensuring security, as well as identifying trained people in case of emergencies.

G. Evacuation

In case of an evacuation need, volunteers will help to safely escort children and students to a pre-designated meeting area outside of the church. Each ministry room has a posted evacuation plan and map next to the door. The evacuation plans vary by room and age group, so volunteers should familiarize themselves with the plan prior to an emergency. During an evacuation, parents should meet you at the designated meeting area. Children should not be released to their parents until all children on the class attendance are accounted for. If parents do arrive before you are at the meeting area, encourage them to walk with you to the destination.

H. Avoid Being Alone With A Student

Staff and volunteers should make every attempt to never be alone with a student. This includes being in the same room with the door closed, being in a car, an isolated area of the church, etc. Discussions in open areas and within the site of others are fine. When you find yourself in a situation where you are going to be alone with a student, immediately contact the Student Ministry Leader or the parent. This includes being alone virtually as well (Facetime, Zoom, etc.).

Exceptions:

- Counseling situations by a pastor or Community Care staff in the church office while other adults are nearby. (All doors must have windows or doors should be left open.)
- An adult volunteer or staff member meeting one on one with a student must be in a public space with others present.

I. Overnights

No child/minor student may participate in an organized Student Ministry overnight event unless they have provided the Student Ministry leader with written parental authorization to participate in an overnight. All official overnight trips require separate sleeping areas for both genders.

J. Leader/Student Romantic Relationships

No leader may have a romantic relationship with a student. If a leader and a student engage in a romantic relationship no matter how close they are in age, the leader will be removed from their position immediately. They may be subject to further legal action.

VII. Incident & Lost Child Reporting

A. Incident Report

The church has a policy that requires anyone participating in an activity sponsored by Grace Chapel on or off site (or an event at Grace Chapel sponsored by an outside organization) to report to the staff member or ministry leader if a child or student is injured. A written Incident Report should be submitted as soon as possible and be signed by the parent/guardian when they are informed ([Appendix C](#)).

B. Found Child Policy

A found child is a child who is not in the care of the *Kidstown* staff and appears to be separated from their parents and typically under age 10. This child may be wandering an empty corridor, be in the middle of a crowd, or outside the building. The child may appear to be distressed from being separated from the family or is calling out for the mother or father. As soon as the child is found they should be taken to the information center to be reunited with parent/guardian/leader. Then immediately notify all radioed personnel that the child has been found and to be on the lookout for their parent/guardian.

C. Lost Child Policy

A lost child is a child who has become separated from his/her parent/guardian or run from a KT leader or SHINE buddy. As soon as possible, notice should be given to all available security personnel and staff with a description of the child – approximate age, gender, name, clothing, and area of the building last seen. All available personnel should proceed to their nearest exit to prevent the child from leaving the building while others begin to search the floors. As soon as the child is found they should be taken to the information center to be reunited with parent/guardian/leader. Then immediately notify all personnel that the child has been found and is safely reunited. If the child left the presence of a KT or SHINE leader, an incident report should be filed. No report is necessary if the child had been in the care of their own parent/guardian.

Process:

Grace Chapel ministry staff and volunteer leaders will approach the child, make eye contact by getting down to the child's level, and ask the child if they are looking for the mother and/or father. If the child responds in the affirmative, then:

- Assure the child that you will help find the parents
- Take the child's hand and continue to give comfort
- Look around the area and wait to possibly see if an adult comes forward
- After a reasonable amount of time, tell the child you will be taking him/her to a main location
- Bring the child to the Main Information Desk and alert security and the Kidstown team of your action.
- Wait with the child until the parents are located.

Follow-Up:

- Report the incident to a staff member or ministry leader.
- If necessary (as stated above), Complete an Incident Form ([Appendix C](#)) and have Parent/Guardian Sign form.

VIII. COVID-19 Related Information

As COVID-19 related protocols are constantly changing please contact your campus director for the most up to date Grace Chapel policies for your campus.

IX. Appendixes

A. Appendix A: Child Welfare Definitions of Abuse.

These definitions are provided from the Department of Children and Families

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/definitions-of-abuse-and-neglect>

- a. **Neglect:** Failure by a caregiver, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care, including malnutrition or failure to thrive; provided, however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition.
- b. **Abuse:** This definition is not dependent upon location. Abuse can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or an in-home setting.
 1. The non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse of a child; or
 2. The victimization of a child through sexual exploitation or human trafficking, regardless if the person responsible is a caregiver.

Caregiver definition

- A child's parent, stepparent, guardian, or any household member entrusted with the responsibility for a child's health or welfare
- Any other person entrusted with responsibility for a child's welfare, whether in the child's home, a relative's home, a school setting, a child care setting (including babysitting), a foster home, a group care facility, or any other comparable setting. As such "caregiver" includes, but is not limited to:
 - School teachers
 - Babysitters
 - School bus drivers
 - Camp counselors

The "caregiver" definition should be construed broadly and inclusively to encompass any person who at the time in question is entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the child. This specifically includes a caregiver who is him/herself a child such as a babysitter under age 18.

Physical injury definition

Death, fracture of a bone, subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, soft tissue swelling, skin bruising and any other such nontrivial injury depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred, and the number and location of bruises.

Emotional injury definition

An impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by an observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function with a normal range of performance and behavior.

Sexual abuse definition

Any non-accidental act by a caregiver upon a child that constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or any sexual contact between a caregiver and a child for whom the caregiver is responsible.

Sexually exploited child definition

As defined in MGL Chapter 119, Section 21, any person under the age of 18 who has been subjected to sexual exploitation because such person:

- Is the victim of the crime of sexual servitude pursuant to section 50 of chapter 265 or is the victim of sex trafficking as defined in 22 United States Code 7105
- Engages, agrees to engage or offers to engage in sexual conduct with another person in exchange for a fee, in violation of subsection (a) of section 53A of chapter 272, or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education or care
- Is a victim of the crime of inducing a minor into prostitution under section 4A of chapter 272, or
- Engages in common night walking or common streetwalking under section 53 of chapter 272

Human trafficking victim definition

The following is based on MGL Chapter 233, Section 20M and MGL Chapter 265, Sections 50 and 51.

A person who is subjected to harboring, recruitment, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting for the purpose of:

- Sex trafficking (i.e., inducement to perform a commercial sex act, forced sexual services and/or sexually explicit performance), and/or
- Labor trafficking (i.e., forced services, involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery)

For more information and examples of indicators of abuse and neglect can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/what-is-abuse-and-neglect>

B. Appendix B: Suspected Abuse Report Form

Grace Chapel, Inc., Lexington Ma

Date:

Name of child/student:

Age:

Phone:

Address:

Name of parent or caretaker:

Name of person making report:

Name of person receiving report:

Nature of suspected abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect):

Indications of suspected abuse (including facts, physical signs, and course of events where necessary):

Action taken (include date and time):

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept strictly confidential.

Person Reporting:

Print Name:

Signed:

Pastor/Director of Designated Authority:

Print Name:

Signed:

C. Appendix C: Incident Report

Grace Chapel Next Generation Ministry

To help us keep our facilities and procedures safe for everyone, please report incidents of injury, nearly avoided injury, maintenance needed to eliminate hazards, and lost child on this form.

Date:

Location:

Name of child/student:

Name of person completing the form:

Description of incident:

Recommendation for avoiding recurrence or eliminating hazard:

Immediate action taken:

Volunteer Signature:

Volunteer Printed Name:

Reported to Parent Guardian:

Parent/Guardian Signature:

D. Appendix D: Authorization and Release of Liability

Grace Chapel Next Gen: Safety Policy Release

Please read and sign below.

I acknowledge that I have read the Children's and Student Ministry Safety Policy of Grace Chapel and agree to be bound by it.

I understand that a violation of this policy can result in my dismissal from my role. I hereby represent and warrant that the information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, to give you any information regarding my character and fitness for volunteer service. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by the church, I hereby release the organization with which I am applying to volunteer and all of directors, officers, employees, agents and volunteers or any other person or organization from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs or family relating to the obtaining, communication and use of information about me or relating to this authorization on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information. I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release as my own free act.

I understand that the information contained in this application will be held confidential (except where otherwise noted) by the church staff.

Print Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

Please return completed and signed form to:

Grace Chapel
Attn: NextGen Ministry
3 Militia Dr.
Lexington, MA 02421

E. Appendix E: Kidstown Application

Go to grace.org/ServeNextGen to fill out the online application form for either Kidstown or Student Ministry.

The Kidstown one is also available below in a paper copy for you to fill out and return to your director.

Date:

Campus:

Circle which Kidstown Ministry: Early Childhood Elementary SHINE

Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Church History: Have you personally accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and are you committed to having the character of Jesus live through you?

Briefly describe your faith journey and what it means to you (use additional paper if necessary):

How long have you attended Grace Chapel?

Do you regularly attend worship at Grace Chapel?

In what areas of ministry do you currently participate/serve in?

List any previous work involving children and/or students. Please include name and address of organization and contact person email. (Use additional paper if necessary).

References: List two adults that you have known for at least one year, who are not related to you and have definite knowledge of your character and ability to work with children or students.

1. Someone from Grace Chapel (church member, ministry leader, small group leader):

Name:

Relationship:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

2. Someone from outside Grace Chapel (employer, social friend, neighbor):

Name:

Relationship:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Personal Information:

Circle One: Single Married, Spouse Name:

Do you have children? No Yes, Names and ages:

Have you lived outside of Massachusetts in the last 5 years? If yes, please list full addresses here:

Please list your gifts, abilities, and passions (i.e. music, teaching, etc.)

The questions listed below are to ensure a safe environment for our children and students. All information will be confidential. Answering "yes" may not necessarily preclude your involvement in Children's Ministry.

Do you currently have an untreated addiction to drugs, alcohol, pornography, or any other addictions?

Yes No

Have you ever been accused, charged, or alleged to have, or have you ever committed any act of neglecting, abusing, or molesting any child?

Yes No

Is there any circumstance or pattern in your life that would compromise the integrity of Grace Chapel, or Children's Ministry?

Yes No

Would you like to meet with a pastor regarding any of the above circumstances?

Yes No

There are many areas of ministry in which you can serve with Kidstown. Check out www.grace.org/ServeNextGen and select your campus to see the roles that are currently available at your campus.

Please return completed form to your director or to Grace Chapel, Attn: Children's Ministry 3 Militia Drive, Lexington MA 02421