



## **Dix Hills Kids Ministry Guidelines**

*The following are policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure the safety of all children and their leaders as well as define appropriate relationships among children and their ministry leaders.  
Children are defined as anyone attending our ministries from birth through grade 6.*

### **Underlying Philosophy**

Our kids ministry's goal is to help our children and families *Belong, Believe, and Become* by **Loving Christ**, **Serving Others**, and **Making Disciples**. However, because we live in a fallen world where temptation is prevalent and actions can be misinterpreted, it is critical to create boundaries to protect both our leaders and children from falling into sin or being falsely accused. At the end of the day no policy can truly stop sin, and it is only through the power of Jesus that we can find true freedom. While these policies are helpful, the willingness of volunteers, parents, and children to have open communication and creating an atmosphere where it is normal to take a person aside and confront them according to Jesus' own words in Matthew 18:15-20, is far more crucial for the healthiness of the ministry.

### **Background Checks and Interview Process**

It is mandatory that every adult who works with children must submit to a New York Background Check, as well as go through the interview and training process overseen by the youth pastor or children's ministry team leader as approved by the elders before becoming a children's ministry volunteer.

### **Physical Contact between Leaders and Children**

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between youth leaders and students. The guidelines below are intended to avoid physical contact that may be misinterpreted or may appear threatening or inappropriate. All children's leaders and volunteers should avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

- Some appropriate forms of affection with children are: side hugs, pats on the shoulder or back, handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps, verbal praise, holding hands during group prayer.
- Inappropriate forms of affection include but are not limited to: inappropriate or lengthy embraces, kisses, sitting on laps, showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, wrestling or tickling, and any form of unwanted affection – physical or verbal.

## **Working with Infants**

There should be at least two volunteers in the nursery at all times for it to be considered staffed. There will be no diaper changing, unless a parent signs a waiver with permission for volunteers to do so. Parents should write down their phone number on the sign-in sheet, so that a volunteer can contact the parent without leaving the nursery.

## **Communication between Leaders and Children**

The guiding principle for communication between leaders and children is transparency. We want to foster healthy boundaries between leaders and children and to avoid any misinterpretation or inappropriate communication.

- **General Guidelines:**

1. At least 2 volunteers are needed to run a small group or Sunday school class. The volunteers can be one adult and one teen helper, or two adults.
2. If a child needs to talk to a leader privately during an activity, they must remain visible to others.
3. Leaders cannot promise to keep secrets and need to let the child know that if he or she is being hurt or someone else is being hurt or the concern is so great, then they will need to break the confidence.

- **One-on-One Mentoring:**

1. There will be no one-on-one mentoring until a child enters fifth grade. If a volunteer wants to have further discussion with a child, or a child wants to talk with a volunteer outside of our normal ministry meetings, a parent/guardian of the child must be present during the meeting and the volunteer must consult with the youth pastor prior to any such meeting.
2. Upon entering fifth grade, a child may meet with a leader of the same sex for one-on-one mentoring with written permission from a parent or guardian (*see attached waiver*).
  - a. Leaders must confirm all one-on-one meetings with parents in advance, so that the parents are aware of when/where the meeting will be happening, as well as the frequency of meetings.
  - b. Leaders must also communicate with the youth pastor prior to and following one-on-one meetings, so that the youth pastor is able to mentor the leader through the process and be aware of when/how often meetings are happening.
  - c. One-on-one mentoring must be done in a public place (i.e. a restaurant or café) where the child and leader are clearly visible.
  - d. Leaders are not allowed to drive children to and from one-on-one mentoring sessions. The parent/guardian must drive to and pick up the child from the meeting location.

- **Texting/Calling/Emailing:**

1. All texting/calling/emailing should be directed to parents and not to the children. Leaders should not be texting/calling/emailing children in our ministries.

- **Social Media and Video Games:**

1. Leaders should not follow/communicate with the children in our ministries on social media, nor should they play videogames online together.

### **Trips and Transportation of Students**

As much as possible, our children's ministries will attempt to meet at one place and avoid the need to transport children. However, transporting children to and from church activities/events is permitted under the following conditions:

- The parent has given written permission for their child to be transported.
- The driver is 25 years or older and has had a valid driving license for a minimum of 3 years.
- There is never to be one child alone with one volunteer, regardless of gender (unless it is the volunteer's own child).
- For all trips, at least two volunteers must be in the vehicle. Married couples may transport minors. If one volunteer is a student and the other an adult, the policies regarding the transportation of students also applies here.
- If a parent/guardian is unable to pick up their child after an event, leaders are allowed to drop off the child at his or her home only after communicating with the parent or guardian (*This should not be the norm*).

### **Reporting Concerns or Possible Abuse, Maltreatment or Neglect**

All children's leaders and volunteers are mandated to report any and all signs of behaviors of suspected or disclosed abuse to the Youth Pastor or the Senior Pastor, as they are the designated persons who will decide how to proceed and respond. Concerns about suspected or actual child abuse should be shared only with the persons mentioned above and those directly involved in the reporting process (e.g., Child Protective Services) and not with anyone else. Failure to report the above items is both a poor spiritual witness and illegal according to state law.



## Dix Hills Kids Ministry Permission Waiver

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am the parent or guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, who is a child in the children's ministries at Dix Hills. I am giving permission for the following:  
*(Please initial next to each permitted form of communication):*

\_\_\_\_\_ My child may be transported for children's ministry events as dictated by the guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child may meet with a leader of the same sex for one-on-one mentoring as dictated by the guidelines. *Only applicable for fifth and sixth graders.*

Parent's Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I recognize that as a parent or guardian, I have a responsibility to protect my kid(s) and raise them in a God-honoring way. Part of this is knowing who my child is being mentored and disciplined by. As a parent, I understand that these policies are meaningless if there is not a culture of communication and confrontation based on Jesus' command in Matthew 18:15-20. While the children's leaders are seeking to hold one another accountable, I also have a responsibility to build up the body of Christ, specifically when it involves holding accountable the leaders who are disciplining my child and encouraging my kid(s) in their own walk with God.

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(Signature)

(Date)