

First Evangelical Free Church of Maine

Nursery Policies and Procedures for Staff and Volunteers

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“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” - Mark 10:13-16

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).” As you contemplate stepping into the nursery, ask God for patience, understanding and discernment to meet each one of the children’s needs.

Please minister to and discipline the children with “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” - Gal. 5:22

Nursery Ministry Introduction

This policy and procedures manual is for the nursery staff, volunteers and parents and describes the strategy, structure and policies of the Nursery Ministry of First Evangelical Free Church (“The Church” or “FEFCM”). In this document the term "staff" refers to paid personnel, "volunteer" refers to non-paid personnel and the term "worker" refers to both paid and non-paid personnel.

Nursery Ministry Vision

To provide an environment of safety, love and respect where the child learns about the love of God and the importance of Scripture; the parent feels respected and loved and knows that their child is loved and well cared for; and the volunteers and staff are valued and supported as a part of a ministry team that is serving our families with young children.

Nursery Ministry Missions

- To teach children about God, His love and His Word
- To create an environment of love and compassion for children to feel safe;
- To be welcoming to visitors
- To provide quality service and respect to our parents so that they trust the environment in which they are leaving their children
- To protect children from harm
- To protect FEFCM, its staff and volunteers from potential litigation.

Nursery Ministry Personnel Structure

- Nursery Director: Alberta Pierce
- Assistant Nursery Director: Melyssa Littlefield
- Volunteers: Adult volunteers must be 18 years or older and passed a background check.
- Helpers must be at least 12 years old. Helpers under the age of 18 will not carry children or hold them while standing.

Our Nursery

Our nursery is open during the Worship Service and during Sunday School. Infants are in one room and 2-3s are in a separate room. We do not currently have a Children’s church for children older than 3. Parents may place their children in the Nursery during Worship Service, during Sunday School or both. Parents are encouraged to volunteer to work in the Nursery. We will do everything we can to keep your children safe and to honor you as parents. We will be flexible with our rules, where we can and where it doesn’t negatively impact children, Nursery workers or other parents.

Nursery Policies and Procedures for Staff and Volunteers

Nursery Personnel Guidelines

- All parents/guardians whose children regularly attend the nursery must volunteer on a regular basis in order to provide enough adults in the rooms to keep the children safe.
- All paid staff and non-paid volunteers must fill out an application, provide references and pass a background check. Background checks are to be completed for every person working with children to protect the children from harm and the church from litigation.
- Background checks will only be seen by the Church Administrator and filed for legal purposes. No one else will see the background checks. If issues on a background check show a history of violence or child-related offenses, the Nursery Director will only be told that the applicant is not eligible to serve, but details will not be given.
- All paid staff and non-paid volunteers must agree to abide by the policies and procedures before they can volunteer in any of the Nursery Ministry areas.
- All paid staff and non-paid volunteers must agree to serve under the direction of the Nursery Director and follow her leadership and instruction while in the nursery.
- Minors applying to volunteer must be at least 12-years-old.
- The Nursery Director will work to encourage the staff and volunteers as they serve. This includes making sure expectations are clearly communicated and policies and procedures are enforced.
- FEFCM will work to develop community within the Nursery Ministry volunteers. We must make an investment in our volunteers - they are our most valuable resource.
- No adult worker, staff or volunteer, will work with Youth except in the presence of another adult with a background clearance. If there are not two security-cleared adults at the Nursery, parents will not be allowed to leave their children until there are two cleared adults.

Nursery Service Guidelines

- Please consider this a ministry to our young families and an opportunity to show parents and children the love of Christ in every situation.
- All nursery volunteers and staff must be in the classroom ready to receive children 10 minutes before the start time of a church event (for example, 8:50 AM on Sunday mornings before Worship Services at 9:00 AM).
- Children from birth through 3-years-old will be allowed in the nursery. Any child that is 4-years-old by October 1 will be moved to the next age class.
- Parents should be kept outside the nursery to prevent accidents with little ones getting under foot and to keep the nursery sanitary.
- All nursery staff and volunteers must stay in their assigned area for the duration of their shift. (Excepting bathroom trips.) Always let another worker know if you need to leave the area or use the restroom. At no time will there be less than two workers with the children.
- Have a positive and energetic attitude towards the parents and children. Always letting them know that their child is loved and happy here.
- Nursery staff and volunteers should NEVER give parenting advice, opinions or judgments about a parent's instructions or a child's attitude or behavior (or that of the parents) unless it is explicitly requested by the parents. No matter how much you disagree with the parents' parenting style, it is disrespectful to express this or ignore the parents' wishes. All parents are shown respect and courtesy - no exceptions.
- Everything that transpires in the nursery is confidential. This includes the emotional, physical, medical and intellectual condition of every child and should not be discussed outside the nursery or gossiped about inside the nursery.
- Do not tell a parent that their child behaved badly unless the parent asks. Routine conflicts are normal and should not be reported to parents, unless the parent instructs otherwise. If a child is injured, showing a bump, bruise or cut, the circumstances will be communicated to the parent. If another child was involved, that child's parents will also be informed.
- According to Maine law, any person taking care of children, even if not compensated, is subject to mandatory reporting if there are signs of child abuse. Any such signs will be reported to the Pastor who will determine if the signs are covered by the state Mandatory Reporting laws. If so, the Pastor will notify the appropriate state agency.
- No cell phone use is permitted while on duty (including calls, texts, IMs, Internet usage or any other usage). A person looking at their phone is not watching the children.
- If a parent needs to be contacted because of an inconsolable child, the ushers will be asked to request the parents' presence.
- Staff and parent volunteers are permitted to prepare bottles and change diapers.
- Friends and visitors of the workers are not permitted in the nursery rooms.
- Nursery workers should not take pictures of kids and should not post any information regarding the children on social media. Parents and other congregation members should not take pictures of children in the Nursery.

Absences and Issue Reporting

- If a volunteer is unable to work on their assigned week, she should contact other volunteers on the schedule to find a replacement and let the Nursery Director know of the change.
- If the Nursery Director is unable to work, the Assistant will cover her shift.
- If a staff member or volunteer has concerns with a parent/guardian who refuses to comply with the policies and procedures or has any other issue, the Nursery Director should be informed. If the Director cannot resolve the issue, she will contact the Pastor. If the Pastor is not available and the matter is urgent an Elder will be contacted.
- If a parent/guardian has an issue with how they were treated, whether their instructions were followed or how their child was cared for they should contact the Nursery Director. If the Director cannot resolve the issue, she will contact the Pastor. If the Pastor is not available and the matter is urgent an Elder will be contacted.

Safety and Security

Creating an environment where parents feel comfortable to leave their children is one of our highest priorities.

- Adults are not to toss or throw children in the air when playing with them.
- Adults are not to lift a baby or toddler up by holding their hands and lifting their arms in the air as this can cause shoulder dislocation in many children.
- Adults are not to poke, prod, or tickle children. Many children do not like this and cannot communicate their dislike to an adult.
- Children should not be taken out of the nursery rooms for any reason during their time of care, except in the case of an emergency.
- In case of an emergency, it is the responsibility of the Nursery worker, not the parent, to take the children to a safe place. This will avoid confusion as to who has primary responsibility. A parent may assist the Nursery worker to evacuate the children.
- In case of an emergency, parents and children will meet in front of the landscape sheds. This will get them away from the building and out of the way of emergency personnel.
- Fire escape and evacuation routes should be posted in each room, and the nursery volunteers should follow evacuation procedures.
- Workers should calmly but quickly organize the children for evacuation. It is very important that the workers closely follow the instructions given by the Nursery Director. The calm reaction of the workers will be comforting to the children.
- A worker must ensure that all children were picked up and classrooms are fully evacuated before leaving the building. Doors should be left open after each room has been evacuated.

Parents are Primary

It is important that the nursery cares for children in the best manner possible to offer the parents the opportunity to worship and fellowship without concern for their children. In order to accomplish this objective, parents may only be contacted if the Nursery Director deems the situation warrants it.

- **The parent is always right**, and they know what is best for the child. If they have requested that they are to be notified if the child is upset, then we should do so. Otherwise, as long as the child is content and can be re-engaged, parents are not to be notified.
- Nursery workers should work to engage the child in activities and play by getting down to eye-level with the child while moving them away from the door after arrival.
- If the worker believes parents should be notified they are to contact the Nursery Director, who will contact the parents.

Classroom Check-in and Check-out

- Parents will fill out a sticker for each child each week. This sticker will include the child's name, parents name, allergies and any other instructions. The sticker will be placed on the child's back. This will ensure children are properly cared for by the volunteer staff.
- Workers must follow parents' instructions, unless the instructions violate a policy or procedure. If their request violates a policy or procedure, the parents should be told respectfully and kindly that we will not be able to fulfill their request and why at the time they drop off their children so they have the opportunity to decide how they want to provide that need for their child.
- All children must be signed in and have an information sheet completed or have one on file that remains out on a bulletin board for workers to view easily. The board should only be visible to Nursery workers.
- The information sheet should include any allergies and food restrictions, and everyone who is allowed to pick up the child from the nursery. These should be updated by the parents as this information changes.
- All children's belongings must have name identification (diaper bags, cups, etc.).
- A parent or adult guardian listed on the information sheet must pick up the child. A child will not be released to siblings, relatives or other adults not listed on the information sheet. A sibling must be at least 16 years old to be on the release list.
- The worker should meet parents at the door when the child is being checked in and always maintain a Christ-like attitude when serving our children and their parents. Many times you are providing the first impression of our church. Smile, be friendly, and treat all parents and their children with respect.

- All children should be returned to the parents in as clean or cleaner condition than the child arrived. Faces, hands and clothing should be clean (clothing should be as clean as possible, unless child arrived in dirty clothing).
- Diapered children should be returned to parents in a clean diaper, unless the child was changed within the past hour.

Disciplinary Policy

- Always maintain a Christ-like attitude when instructing the child and model the love and respect you are asking the child to show you and others. As a nursery worker your goal is to engage the child relationally, which will give you an opportunity to influence the child's life.
- A child is usually disruptive because they either crave attention, they are bored or they are confused. The solution:
 1. Don't reinforce misbehavior with too much attention, briefly address it and move on. Create a positive culture by proactively giving attention to positive behaviors.
 2. Try to keep children from being bored.
 3. Fuzzy rules and no consequences are a guarantee for misbehavior. Set clear expectations and consequences and enforce them fairly and consistently.
- **Physical punishment is forbidden** for all nursery staff and volunteers, including parents who serve in a room with their own children. Parents are not allowed to scold or physically punish their own children during their time in the nursery as this is upsetting to other children in the room.
- Disruptive behavior should always be handled in the room, not in isolation with the worker and a child alone. Never humiliate a child in front of others or in private.
- The only discipline allowed in the nursery is time-out which should be limited to the age of the child (for example, 2 minutes for a 2-year-old). **Scolding, harsh words and physical punishment of any kind are forbidden.**
- If a child needs correction, it should be done in a firm, but calm tone and should address only the behavior ("no hitting") and never the character of the child ("bad boy"). Also, tell the child the behavior you want to see when giving correction ("no hitting, please use your words to say what you want").
- When it is evident that you have an extreme case which cannot be handled with time-out, parents should be contacted, preferably by the Nursery Director.

Diaper Changing and Bathroom Trips

- Parents should supply diapers, wipes, a burp pad and a change of clothing for their child each time they drop off their child. FEFCM will supply extra diapers and wipes as backup.
- Workers should check periodically for wet or soiled diapers.
- Workers should have diaper bag, diaper and all materials at changing table prior to laying the child down for a change. **A child should never be left alone while on the changing table -- not even for a second.**
- Rubber gloves, wet wipes, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing surface spray are to be provided at each diaper-changing table for the safety of the child and the worker.
- Only apply powder, lotion, or medicated cream if provided in the child's bag and with the parent's instruction.
- Keep all items (cleaners, wipes, etc.) out of the reach of children.
- Dirty diapers should be placed in the Diaper Genie for later removal by the custodian.
- The changing table should be covered with a disposable pad that is changed after soiling to prevent germs from spreading.
- There is a limited supply of extra clothing and diapers for a child who arrives without the proper supplies. Please ask parents to wash and return any clothing used for their child.
- Potty training activities may be done with children whose parents are notified and have approved of such activities for their child. Do not attempt to potty train a child without the parent's consent.

Food

- Parents must write down feeding and nap instructions on the sign in sheet.
- Parents must label all bottles and sippy cups with the child's name.
- Bottles may be fed to babies by staff or volunteers only according to the instructions given by the parents. If a child becomes inconsolable, their parent should be contacted before feeding the child at a time other than the time requested by the parent.
- FEFCM does NOT provide formula, bottles or baby food for infants.
- FEFCM DOES provide snacks for toddlers. Approved snacks are: water, goldfish and animal crackers.
- If parents request dietary restrictions (for example, no sugar), these should be respected and followed without question or judgment. If the parents do not provide alternative snacks, the child should NOT be given any food in the classroom. Parents need to know that their requests are being honored even when they are not watching.

Activities

- Children should not bring their own toys into the nursery, unless it is a special "security" item. This prevents children from losing toys or having them damaged by another child.

Wellness Policy

For the protection of all children and workers, neither children nor workers nor volunteers with any of the following symptoms will be admitted into the nursery:

- Fever within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Untreated Pink Eye or other eye infection
- Symptoms of childhood diseases.
- Sore throat
- Any communicable disease
- Croup
- Common Cold, including colored runny nose
- Lice, including the presence of eggs or nits

These are the guidelines that we follow and we expect children, staff and volunteers to be **free of these symptoms for 24 hours prior to coming back to the nursery.**

In the case a Nursery Ministry worker suspects a child is sick or does not meet the standards of the Wellness Policy, they should contact the Nursery Director who will contact the parents. An ill child may not stay in the classroom.

Medications

- The nursery staff and volunteers WILL NOT administer any medication except in life threatening situations when there is not enough time for a parent to come to the room and administer it.
- In a situation where a child has a known potentially life-threatening condition and medication may need to be given, a Medication Authorization form should be completed and signed by the parent.

Accidents and Incidents

- In the event a child is injured or injures another child (and the incident leaves a mark or bump or worse), the Nursery Director will contact the parents and file a written report with the Church Administrator.
- A first-aid kit stocked regularly is kept in each room.
- In the event of an emergency, volunteers should secure the scene and contact the Nursery Director to handle the situation.
- Fire escape and evacuation routes should be posted in each room, and the nursery volunteers should follow evacuation procedures.

Room Cleanliness

- Furnishings and toys should be age-appropriate, having no sharp edges, missing or loose wheels or broken areas. All broken toys must be discarded and/or replaced.
- Walls, counters, shelves, drawers, cabinets, tables and floors should be free of clutter and cleaned up after each day the nursery is used. All supplies should be put away at the end of each day the nursery is used. This should be done by all workers as a team effort at the end of each day.
- Toys used are to be sprayed with sanitizer or wiped down with Clorox wipes at least once a month. If a child in the Nursery is later found to have been sick, all toys will be cleaned before the next week. In addition, toys will be cleaned as needed based on observation.
- Bedding should be covered with disposable pads and changed after soiled to prevent germs from spreading to other children.
- Stuffed toys are NOT permitted in the nursery. This is to prevent the spread of germs with toys that cannot be properly sanitized.
- Used bedding should be washed after use. All other bedding should be washed monthly by nursery staff using unscented, liquid laundry detergent.
- In the infant room, toys and teethers placed in a child's mouth should be placed in the bin labeled "To Be Washed" after the child is done playing with it. The Nursery Director is responsible to make sure that the toys and teethers in this bin are sanitized each week.
- Cleaned toys and teethers are placed in the bin labeled "Clean" and workers must be sure that children are only given toys from this bin.