



The Bridge Bible Church Ministry Policies

Dear Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to The Bridge Bible Church!

At The Bridge Bible Church, our responsibility to care for children and students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which preschoolers, children and students, entrusted in our care, can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ to “Start children off in the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 122:6).

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, employees, and volunteers, and our entire church family at The Bridge Bible Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

The Bridge Bible Church Leadership

The Bridge Bible Church

Policies & Procedures

Contents:

- Overview of Safety System 4
- Child Safety Policy..... 5
- Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse..... 5
- Safety Committee 6
- Children’s Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan 7
- Building Safety 9
- Worker to Child Ratio 9
- Discipline 10
- Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guidelines..... 11
- Intoxicants 12
- Medication 12
- Nudity..... 12
- One-to-One Interaction with Children..... 12
- Transportation 12
- Parental Contact 12
- Parental Involvement..... 13
- Physical Contact..... 13
- Sexually Oriented Conversations 13
- Sexually Oriented Materials 14
- Tobacco Use..... 14
- Verbal Interactions 14
- Release of Children 14
- Supervision 14

Overview of The Bridge Bible Church Safety System

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, The Bridge Bible Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The Bridge Bible Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of The Bridge Bible Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, The Bridge Bible Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training must be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete The Bridge Bible Church’s Screening Process, which includes:

- a Safety Application;
- a face-to-face interview; and
- references to be checked (it is the applicants responsibility to notify all references listed in the application)

*A volunteer must attend The Bridge Bible Church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children or students.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

The Bridge Bible Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in childrens’ or students’ activities undergo a criminal background check.

*This is not required for any student volunteer under the age of 18.

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of The Bridge Bible Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's or Student's Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

ABUSE TOLERANCE

The Bridge Bible Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteers at The Bridge Bible Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to an immediate supervisor, the Ministry Director, or the Family Pastor.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child abuse is any sexual activity with a child - whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child.

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse can include behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

SPECIFIC ACTS AND OMISSIONS IN VIOLATION OF THE POLICY

The following acts or omissions are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated during any activity or program. They are to be immediately reported to the Ministry Director after the safety of the child, children, youth, or minor involved has been assured.

1. INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility,

while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any The Bridge Bible Church program or activity.

2. MEDICATION

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Children's Ministry.

3. NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers serving in Children's Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the Ministry Director concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

4. ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Children's Ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

5. TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by The Bridge Bible Church, unless in an emergency.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.

6. SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

7. SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children in their care.

8. TOBACCO USE

The Bridge Bible Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during The Bridge Bible Church activities or programs. The Bridge Bible Church is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

The Bridge Bible Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, The Bridge Bible Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Children's and Student's Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Ministry Director or the Family Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children/students or Ministry staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's or Student's Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children and students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Ministry Director or the Family Pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

The Bridge Bible Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report ‘grooming’ behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Ministry Director, or the Family Pastor.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

The Bridge Bible Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children’s and/or Student’s Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of our Lead Pastoral Team and the Board of Elders.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Ministry Director, or the Family Pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children’s and/or Student’s Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at The Bridge Bible Church. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from The Bridge Bible Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at The Bridge Bible Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Sexual Abuse reporting Laws in California

A mandated reporter is required to call the Police Department in the city where the incident occurred immediately or as soon as is practicable. Turn in a written report within 48 hours to the Police Department in the city where the incident occurred.

Child sexual abuse (PC 11165.1)

Includes sexual assault or sexual exploitation of anyone under the age of 18. Sexual assault includes sex acts with children, intentional masturbation in the presence of children, and child molestation. Sexual exploitation includes preparing, selling, or distributing pornographic materials involving children; performances involving obscene sexual conduct; and child prostitution.

Who do you report to?

The report must be made to a county welfare department, probation department (if designated by the county to receive mandated reports), or to a police or sheriff's department, not including a school district police or security department (PC 11165.9). Reports by commercial print and photographic print processors are to be made to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the case (PC 11166[e]).

Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect to:

Child Abuse Hotline

(661) 631-6011 (Countywide)

(760) 375-6049 (Ridgecrest)

(Report 24 hours per day, 7 days per week)

For all emergencies call 911

REPORT **ALL** SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE. **WHEN IN DOUBT, REPORT!**

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The Bridge Bible Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN AND STUDENTS

At any time that a child or student has been entrusted to The Bridge Bible Church Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Ministry Director before releasing the child.

SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in Children's and Student's Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Two-Adult Rule

Simply stated, the "Two-Adult Rule" requires no fewer than two screened and unrelated adults present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children and students. This rule creates accountability that helps prevent and deter misconduct. It also reduces the likelihood of a claim of child abuse against The Bridge Bible Church or any adult workers. The "Two-Adult Rule" provides important protection to the church's workers with children and students, as children and parents are less likely to make false accusations against two workers. Workers will also be more comfortable knowing that they will never bear the full burden of leadership and management of the children in their care.

In the event two adults cannot be supported, you may exercise the "Rule of Three" policy below should be followed.

Rule of Three

When the two adult rule cannot be supported, the "rule of three" requires there to be at least three people present—i.e., one employee/volunteer and two or more children/students, or two volunteers and one child/student. Three or more unsupervised children or students do NOT meet the "rule of three" criteria. The goal being that no one adult should ever be alone with one child or student. Children must be at least 5 years old when considering the "rule of three". For the rule of three, its about accountability. It is not appropriate for one screened adult to be with two toddlers as there is no accountability regarding the adult's actions.

BATHROOM PROCEDURES

To properly supervise bathroom visits:

- Screened adults should accompany all children and students to and from the restroom.
- The adult should check the restroom to make sure that it is safe before any child or student enters.
- Avoid allowing a worker to be alone with a child inside the restroom.
- If assistance is required, two screened adults should be present. Prop open the door so that a second adult can visually monitor the assisting adult.
- Good supervision is essential to providing a safe and secure ministry environment. A well-crafted supervision plan protects the children in your care, maintains trust, and helps organize and monitor children's activities.

Appropriate bathroom procedures per age group is as follows:

- Infant – Two Years : Diapering should be done at diaper stations and in the close proximity to other volunteers.

- Two Years – Pre K: Children should use the bathroom in the classroom. The bathroom door should remain open, and the adult can stand outside the door. Should the child require assistance the adult may enter the bathroom and help as needed, making sure the door is open at all times.
- Kindergarten – 2nd Grade: Children should use the bathroom in the classroom
- 5th – 12th Grade: Children should leave the classroom and use the bathroom in the lobby.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY & CHARACTER

- Leaders will be committed to a relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer and the reading of his Word.
- Leaders will attend the main services regularly.
- Leaders will be free from habitual or compulsive behavior such as pornography, eating disorders, self-harm, etc.
- Leaders will be free from being involved with illicit drugs, tobacco, and excessive alcohol use.
- Leaders will be mindful while consuming alcohol in the presence of students and in close vicinity of the church. We do not tolerate drinking of anyone under the age of 21 and will not tolerate leaders getting drunk (Ephesians 5:18).
- Leaders will do all they can to make sure their speech is Godly, edifying, truthful, and trustworthy.
- Leaders will respect other volunteers and staff. Leaders will be supportive of the ministry to students and publically. Any concerns or questions you have will be brought to a Student Ministry staff member privately.
- Leaders will not be involved with adultery, fornication, or homosexual activities.
- Being a leader brings a higher expectation in your relationships. Therefore, we follow 2 Corinthians 6:14 and expect that any non-married volunteer leader would date someone who is a Christian and of “equal yoking.” Furthermore, we expect a high level of purity in non-married dating relationships as addressed in Hebrews 13:4. Non-married leaders will not engage in sexual activity outside of marriage.

SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATION

- Leaders will be above reproach with anything posted on social media.
- Leaders will not post anything that includes explicit content (words/photos/immodesty), alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.
- Leaders will not post extreme political, theological, or social views on social media.
- Leaders will not communicate with students after 10 pm unless it is an emergency or at a Student Ministry event.
- Leaders will not communicate socially with a student of the opposite gender over text message or social media private messaging, other than brief informational-only messages.
- Leaders will not confront a student publically on social media (ie. comment, wall post, message, etc.) for an inappropriate post by a student. If this occurs, please inform a member of The Bridge Student Ministry staff.
- Leaders will delete inappropriate comments posted by friends on their own social media.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of The Bridge Bible Church's Children's and Student's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at The Bridge Bible Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by The Bridge Bible Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between The Bridge Bible Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of The Bridge Bible Church policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to remain attached to The Bridge Bible Church Children's Ministry Policies.]

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of The Bridge Bible Church's Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at The Bridge Bible Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by The Bridge Bible Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between The Bridge Bible Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of The Bridge Bible Church policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to be signed, detached and delivered to the Volunteer Coordinator.]