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Section I: Children’s Ministry Philosophy

A. Why We Exist

Northside Church

Our goal is to **reach, restore** and **release** every individual to expand God's kingdom, by creating a **presence-focused, faith-filled, servant hearted** culture.

Northside Children's Ministry

We believe that the "every individual" includes children. **Mark 10:14** By providing age appropriate classes we intent to **reach** every child where they are at in their development with the good news, **restore** their hearts with the love of Jesus, and **release** them to be a light in their homes, schools and friend groups.

B. Mission Statement

Our volunteer team is what makes it possible to have classes that can reach every child where they are at, and help them grow by demonstrating the **presence-focused, faith-filled, servant hearted** culture of Northside.

1. Presence-Focused

Our gatherings are presence-focused. We intentionally focus our worship on God's presence and what He is doing at the moment. We are sensitive to His leading and we adjust our posture accordingly. We also make space in our gatherings to be present with each other. We are focused on the presence of God and the presence of each another. People are reached through presence. **(Ps. 22:3, Eph. 4:2-3, Zech. 2:5)**

2. Faith-Filled

Our community is faith-filled. We believe that God continues to speak, heal, and restore lives today as He did in the early Church. Faith is the belief in what God can do, regardless of what we may see with our eyes. We make space in our gatherings for people to hear God, to be healed by God, and to be restored by God. People are restored by faith in Jesus. **(Matt. 10:8, 1 Cor. 14:1-5, Heb. 11)**

3. Restoring

Our leaders are servant-hearted. We believe that the best leaders in the Kingdom are servants of God and others. It is our conviction that every person in our community has ability and capacity to serve. Serving is not above or beneath anyone and it is just what healthy families do. People are equipped and released through serving. **(Jn. 13:14-15, Jn. 13:34, Eph. 4:11-13)**

C. Wins

1. Nursery volunteers – They Feel Loved

Communicate the heart of the gospel through creating a loving, caring, and safe environment.

And as we take care of babies and meet their needs, we are teaching them to trust. The ability to trust is essential to faith. As we show babies and toddlers through our care for them, that they can trust us to meet their needs; we are setting them up to trust God to meet their needs.

2. Lil' Kids Volunteers - They Feel Loved and Love God

Provide safe, loving and engaging experiences for Preschoolers learn things like "God is Good" "The Bible is True." "God Loves Me and Wants to Spend Time with Me." And "Nothing is Impossible with God."

Deeper understanding may come later, but this age group is fully capable of connecting to the heart and presence of God and having a very real love for Him.

3. Kids Church Volunteers - They Feel Loved, Love God, and Practice Their Faith

Provide a safe, loving and engaging experiences for Kids to learn about the Bible and practice walking out their faith.

Both the Large Group and Small Group lesson are designed to get the Kids praying for one another, sharing their faith, interacting with the Bible and applying it's truths to their lives.

4. Rock Volunteers - That They Feel Loved, Love God, Practice Their Faith and Engage Their Questions

Provide a safe, loving and engaging conversation for Pre-teens to bring their questions and dig deeper into their faith.

It's normal for this age group to have questions, and God is big enough to handle them all, so in providing a space for them to discuss and explore their questions, we don't need to have all the answers, but rather direct them to our God who does. So they believe that God is real, not just because we say so, but because they know so.

Section II: Basic Rules (Policy)

Child Safety

These "Basic Rules" are a simplification of the Child Safety Policy of the Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada (FGCC) adopted by the Northside Foursquare Church (NFC). The goal of our policy is to provide a safe, secure and happy environment for children to

grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and with others.

A. "Two Adult Rule"

At no time will an adult be left alone with a child or children. This includes all outings that leave the church grounds, such as field trips. This serves to protect both the worker from false accusations as well as the child from potential violations.

B. Parental Permission

Written parental permission will be obtained before any church outing or counseling setting with a child, whether within the church building or outside of the building (i.e. restaurant, school, etc.). If one on one counseling is required, either the parent, a Pastor, or another teacher must be present.

C. Adequate Staffing

The following child/provider ratio will be in place:

Age-group Children/Provider Ratio

Birth to 2 Years:	3 children to 1 adult
Preschool (3 to 5 years):	8 children to 1 adult
Elementary (6-9 Years):	10 children to 1 adult
Tweeners (10 to 12 years):	15 children to 1 adult
Youth (12 and older):	25 children to 1 adult

D. Nursery Identification

Only the parents or guardians of a child in the nursery may pick up that child. Each child will be signed in when brought to the nursery and signed out when picked up.

E. Diaper Changing

Nursery workers will not change Diapers. If a child in the Nursery needs a Diaper change, Nursery volunteers will contact the parent/guardian by the phone number listed on the child's name tag.

F. Use of the Nursery.

Groups or individuals may use the Church nursery with permission but they must adhere to Northside Church's policy. Only persons who have completed a Volunteer Application Form and have been approved, may staff the nursery. (This

includes weddings or any special meetings.)

G. Bathroom Breaks

The preschool department will encourage parents to take their children to the restroom before class. During the middle of class, all children will be given the opportunity to use the restroom again. Preschoolers will be taken in groups of at least 3 to 4 with two workers. All children will wash their hands with soap and water after using the restroom. With older children it is always preferable to send at least two children to the restroom at a time.

Section III: Procedures (Volunteer)

A. Requirements

1. Because we love children and desire to protect them, all volunteers of Northside working with children must agree to complete the following:
 - i. Application form
 - ii. Police Background Check

- iii. Agreement to comply with policies and procedures of FGCC.
2. In order to begin serving in a class, volunteers must be in 8th grade in most circumstances, exceptions can be made for younger students who
 - i. Are serving with a parent
 - ii. display an above average level of responsibility, work ethic and willingness to learn.
 - iii. Volunteers may only serve with children at least 3 years younger than themselves.
 - iv. Volunteers under 18 count as children for child safety ratios, and any classroom with a junior volunteer still needs two adult volunteers.

B. Expectations

1. **Arrival** – Volunteers must arrive a minimum of fifteen (15) minutes prior to the event/service at which they are serving unless otherwise instructed by leadership.
2. **Name Tags** – All volunteers **must** wear their name. Name tags should be worn in plain view where parents, visitors and other leaders can easily locate and identify you.
3. **Departure** – Volunteers must remain in their ministry areas until their last child has been picked up by a parent or until relieved by a member of the leadership.
4. **Absences** – Volunteers are responsible for reporting absence, planned or unforeseen, to a member of the Children's Ministry leadership.

C. Involvement

1. **Preparation** – Read your lesson **before** you arrive in your classroom on Sunday. Often the best advice for classroom management is being prepared.
2. **Prayer** – Pray for your kids and your patience consistently. Ask for guidance, discernment and confidence as you lead the class.

3. **Training**- The Children's ministry leadership believes that ongoing training is an important, effective and required part of being a responsible volunteer. Periodical training will be made available and volunteers are expected to participate in leadership training pertaining to their area of service.
4. **Personal Care** – All volunteers are expected to present themselves modestly in consideration of parents, visitors, leaders, other volunteers and the congregation.
 - **Dress Code** – Attire when working with children must be neat, clean, appropriate for the work being performed. Please consider when working with the kids, you may be bending over, leaning forward, kneeling down, and running around – movements that cause clothing to become revealing, and choose clothing appropriate for sitting on the floor and active games.

Section IV: Procedures (Classroom)

A. General

1. If you notice an unfamiliar person in the classroom, please ask his or her identity and notify the Children's Ministry Leadership. The person's needs will be addressed and they will either be signed in as a visitor or notified about our Parents Room and directed there.
2. A parent should be called from service in the event that a child is completely inconsolable (after at least 10 minutes in our care), ill, injured,

has a disciplinary issue, or is in danger to him or herself or other children.

3. Parents are to be notified and an "Incident Report" completed as soon as possible in the event that an injury has occurred in the classroom. The same applies in the event of a biting situation. The report should be completed, signed by a parent/guardian and turned into a member of the Children's ministry leadership.

B. Wellness/Medication

1. Any child with any of the following symptoms will not be allowed to participate with the other children. If a child should develop any of these while in the program, the parent/guardian shall be notified and the child will be picked up in a timely manner.
 - i. Fever over 100°F (37.5°C) in the last 24 hours.
 - ii. Vomiting in the last 24 hours.
 - iii. Diarrhea in the last 24 hours.
 - iv. Skin rashes or eruptions of unknown origin, including but not limited to: impetigo, measles, chicken pox, etc.
 - v. Persistent coughing associated with respiratory infection, including cold, bronchitis, and so forth.
 - vi. Runny nose with a yellow- or green-coloured discharge of congestion associated with a cough or fever.
 - vii. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) that may also have a coloured discharge or drainage.
 - viii. Parasites, any form of lice, mites, or ringworm. These aren't common, but when present, are very contagious.
2. The parent or guardian of a child is the only one allowed to administer any form of medication to a child except for EpiPens with parental instruction.

C. Feeding/Snacks/Allergies

1. Infants & Toddlers (birth – 35m) – Ask each parent at check-in if their child is able to have one of our pre-approved snacks. Pre-approved snacks may include: Cheerios, Puffs, or Goldfish. If the child is unable to have a snack, please indicate that on the check-in or child label.
 - i. When checking an infant into class, please ask for detailed instructions for how to best care for their child. In regards to feeding, please follow the instructions carefully.

2. 3-5 year olds (Preschool) – There are pre-approved snacks for this area, including Goldfish, Animal Crackers, or Fruit Snacks. Please check the children's tags prior to serving a snack for any allergies. If in doubt as to whether a food is safe for a child, do not give it. Ask the parent at pick-up and make a notation on the tag. We will do our best to input those notes to the computer for future reference.
 - i. Our weekly activities sometimes call for additional snacks to be introduced to the class. In that event, please be sure to point out the food items and ask if there is any problems or allergies. Again, always check the allergies listed and when in doubt, do not give the children food.
3. Elementary (Grade 1-4) – When activities call for a snack, or if you chose to bring a food item in for your class, be sure to check the children's tags for allergies. Whenever possible, check with the parents first.

D. Check-In

1. Upon arrival, each child (0 to Grade seven) is required to Check-In to the computer check-in system by their parent.
2. The Parent will then drop their child off at the appropriate classroom. The name tag must be affixed to the child's garment before they may enter the classroom.
3. One volunteer should be responsible for welcoming each child in to the classroom (i.e. greeting, checking for stickers, asking for special instructions,, etc).
4. Parents/guardians must likewise collect their children from the classroom or approved pick up area. No child under Grade 5 may leave the classroom unattended.
5. No child under the age of 16 may claim a child.
6. Classroom leaders are to remove each child's name tag label from the child's clothing before releasing him or her to a verified adult. This notifies

the leadership that the child has been properly checked out.

Restrooms – Ages 2-4 (Preschool):

- i. Parents should be encouraged to take their children to the restroom prior to the start of class.
- ii. When a preschool child needs to use the restroom, an adult should escort them to the door of the restroom, assist them in the open doorway with any clothing or undergarments, and let them go into the restroom on their own.
- iii. If a child needs assistance, enter while keeping the door propped open. Be sure to wash both your own and the child's hands before leaving.
- iv. In the event that a potty-training child has an accident please contact the Children's Ministry leadership to determine if there are any dry clothes that can be used. When possible we change the child into new clothes and bag the soiled clothes for the parents to pick up after service. If not dry clothes are available, or the accident requires parental assistance, please call the parent from the service to assist and comfort their child.
 1. In the event that bodily fluids are spilled a 'Blood/Body Fluid Spill Report' must be filled out and given to a member of the Children's Ministry leadership.

Section V: Classroom Discipline Policy

We believe that order and structure in the classroom is vital for ministry to occur. Age appropriate classroom rules are posted and enforced.

A. Policy

1. There is to be no corporal punishment of any kind for any reason (i.e. spanking, pinching, etc).

B. Preventative Actions

1. Create a loving, caring atmosphere

2. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for children
3. Focus on positive actions
4. Be fair and consistent with the children
5. Be prepared. When you are prepared, there is less opportunity for you to lose control.

C. Corrective Actions

1. STEP 1: Remind the child of the rule.

When a child deliberately disobeys the classroom rules, he or she will be lovingly reminded of the proper behavior and encouraged to make positive steps to correct (asking forgiveness, giving a hug to the offended, etc.), as mandated in Ephesians 4:32.

2. STEP 2: Gently remove the child

If the behavior continues, the child is then removed from the classroom by the teacher or helper to avoid embarrassment and again lovingly reminded of proper behavior. This is done in the hallway and never in a different classroom.

3. STEP 3: Discover the root

Ask them what the real issue is. It could be as simple as miscommunication or simple conflict with other kids to a deeper issue perhaps generated from the home. Every attempt is made to determine the root cause of the disobedience, to deal directly with the root cause of the disobedience, and to deal directly with the root cause through prayer with the child. These discussions should happen in a hallway and should be brief. The goal is to get them back participating properly with the whole group.

4. STEP 4: Take them to the Leader

If the disobedience occurs again, the child will be taken to the Kids Zone Leader (or overseeing leader of program). Repeated disobedience will result in the loss of classroom participation privileges. Our heart is not to

hinder any child from participating in the classroom ministry but to create a healthy environment for ministry to occur. We believe, however, that repeated disobedience is an outward sign of a deeper inward problem. Pastoral counseling, therefore is available to help in these situations to restore the child back to a fruitful classroom ministry.

Section VI: Accidents, Illnesses and Emergencies

A. Screening Children with Illness

1. Children will not be allowed in class with the following:
 - i. Temperature of 100°F or 38°C degrees or higher
 - ii. Cold symptoms such as runny nose congestion or cough
 - iii. Diarrhea or vomiting within the last 24 hours
 - iv. Any rash or skin conditions unless deemed non-contagious by a physician
 - v. Symptoms of Conjunctivitis or Pink Eye such as coloured discharge from the eye or red, puffy eye lids.

B. First Aid Procedures

1. First aid will be given only in the case of such situations as saving a life or in minor cases such as skinned knees, bumps etc. Anything else will be the responsibility of the parent.

2. Prescription or non-prescription medication MAY NOT be given out unless express permission is given in writing by the child's parent or guardian (verbal authorization may be given for EpiPen use).
3. First Aid kits will be made available and location will be known by the volunteers. A list of current CPR card holders will be in the First Aid kits.

C. Protection from Chemical Substances

1. All chemical substances, including toner, whiteout, dry erase markers, paints, janitor's cleansers and lawn fertilizers will be kept out of reach of children at all times.

D. Blood/Body Fluid Spills

1. In the event that bodily fluids are spilled a 'Blood/Body Fluid Spill Report' must be filled out and one copy given to a member of the Children's Ministry leadership.

The following procedure must be adhered to:

2. Gloves must be worn
3. SMALL SPILL (up to 10cm)
 - i. Wear gloves
 - ii. Wipe area with paper towel
 - iii. Clean area with warm water and detergent/
 - iv. Dry area (as wet areas attract contaminants)
4. LARGE SPILL (over 10cm)
 - i. Wear gloves
 - ii. Flush area with copious amounts of water
 - iii. Use a mop and detergent (clean and disinfect mop and bucket after use)
 - iv. Dry the area
5. BLOOD
 - i. If blood spills in dry area, use chlorine concentrations
 - ii. Clean with warm water and detergent

- iii. Mop and bucket must be cleaned and disinfected after use

E. Emergency Action Plan

1. Emergency procedures for earthquakes, fires and other disasters will be discussed and understood by all volunteers and workers. A copy of the emergency evacuation plan will be posted by all exits.
2. Location of emergency exits, fire stairwells, fire emergency and emergency telephone numbers will be posted and known by all workers. Fire exit doors and pathways will be kept clear at all times. Emergency exit signs will be placed and maintained according to local fire and building codes.

F. Electrical Cord Safety

1. Electrical cords will be checked regularly for safety. Expert advice will be sought concerning the possible need of additional outlets or repair of existing outlets.
2. Special attention will be given to electrical cords, connecting fans, heaters, other ventilation equipment and microphone and speaker cable. Outlet covers will be used in all rooms used for nursery and toddler care.

Section VII: Bullying and Harassment Policy

Policy: "Bullying and harassment is not an acceptable or tolerated form of conduct in the ministry of Northside Foursquare Church" (*NFGC Harassment Policy Statement 2022*).

- For details about this policy and the procedures, please refer to the Northside Foursquare Gospel Church: Harassment Policy Statement and Reporting Procedures.

Section VIII: Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy

**millstone be hung around his neck and that he be
drowned in the depths of the sea."**

- Matthew 18:6

Objective:

Prevention, Detection, Intervention and Restoration

"Jesus loves the little children", is more than just words to a classic children's worship song, it is truly God's heart as reflected most passionately in this passage of Scripture. God takes their safety seriously and because children are so trusting and defenseless, we must make every effort while ministering the love of God to them to do the same. This policy is designed to accomplish two goals:

- I. To provide a safe environment for children and youth where they can come to know Jesus personally and love Him.
- II. To ensure that all persons who work in the nursery through 12th grade are educated as to the nature and symptoms of all forms of child abuse so that prevention detection, intervention and restoration can happen.

A. Prevention

Our mission here at Northside Foursquare Church, is taken from Mark 10:14, where Jesus said, "Let the children come to me ...". Therefore everything we do is aimed at bringing children to their Lord and Saviour, resulting in a life-changing and eternal relationship. It is this relationship with Jesus that ultimately provides for all our children the greatest measure of safety and protection. The promises of the Word of God: eternal life, protection, provision, blessing and healing; belong to those who have chosen Jesus as their Saviour and are actively pursuing a personal relationship with Him. The promises of the Word of God apply equally to children as they do to adults.

1. Classroom Discipline Policy

Northside Foursquare Church 'Children's Ministries Discipline Policy' (please see page 12) is designed to provide order and structure in the classroom so that

healthy ministry can happen. When properly enforced, this policy teaches biblical principles of behavior resulting in an environment where the likelihood of injury is significantly reduced. At no time will workers use any form of physical discipline with a child at Northside. All staff will regularly familiarize themselves with the 'Discipline Policy'.

2. Screening of all paid and volunteer workers

- i. All paid and volunteer children's workers, youth workers, and nursery workers, will complete a 'Volunteer Application Form' and 'Criminal Record Release Form'. The application and Criminal Record Release form must be submitted to a member of the Children's Ministry leadership and will then be approved by either the KidsZone Director, or a Pastor before any volunteer/worker is placed in a classroom.
- ii. Information provided by applicants will be kept in a confidential file in the Children's Ministry Office and shared only with the Pastoral staff and KidsZone Director.
- iii. All adult applicants will be questioned specifically relating to any incidences of sexual abuse they experienced while a minor. It is our desire that all workers display an ongoing spiritual maturity so that they can minister out of spiritual health. A childhood incident of sexual abuse can seriously jeopardize that process if the victim has not allowed the love of Jesus to minister and bring healing to this area.
- iv. The church will, provide annual training of all Christian education workers/volunteers as to the nature of abuse and its prevention and detection. The Kids Zone leader or designated leader will be responsible for providing annual educational services regarding abuse prevention and detection.
- v. Northside Church Children's Ministries will employ the "six month rule". Any person wishing to volunteer in Children's or Youth ministries will be required to have attended Northside regularly for at least six months. This gives the volunteer time to get to know the congregation and become familiar with the staff, church policies and the facility. It also serves to discourage persons wanting immediate access to children and provides

church staff with adequate time to become acquainted with the volunteers and their family.

- vi. All staff will employ the "Show Kids We Care" policy relating the boundaries of physical affection. (see page 25)

B. Detection

1. Definitions of Abuse

Unfortunately, 85% of all incident of sexual abuse occurs between the ages of 4 and 14, the predominate age group of the children's and youth departments. Our goal, is not only the prevention of any form of abuse from occurring here at Northside Church, but to understand the nature and symptoms of abuse and to know specifically what to do if a child discloses an incident of abuse to us.

To discern whether an incidence of sexual abuse has occurred, the following definition is provided. The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect defines child sexual abuse as:

"contacts or interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of that adult or another person. Adolescents and children can also be perpetrators, and an age spread of three years between the victim and perpetrator is sometimes used as a guideline for determining abuse."

2. Reporting Child Abuse

- i. All children's workers will be provided with the Provincial requirements for reporting abuse and the Provincial policy will be strictly adhered to.
- ii. No persons are to act on his/her own initiative with regards to investigating his/her concerns. Asking leading questions and coaxing information from the child can be viewed as coercion thereby potentially making disclosure inadmissible.
- iii. All concerns are to be brought to the KidsZone Director or Youth Pastor immediately after disclosure. They will notify the Senior Pastor.

- iv. When a report has been made within the scope of Provincial requirements, a written report will be presented to the council.

3. Allegations of Abuse Against Church Personnel

- i. Allegation of Abuse
 - a) Upon receiving a written or verbal report alleging that any personnel associated with the church has abused or threatened to abuse a child or if the Senior Pastor receives information about any volunteer personnel that indicates that a child may be at risk in the company of said person, said person shall be immediately suspended from all duties or responsibilities in ministry pending the outcome of an investigation into the allegations and shall be subject to any disciplinary policy provided for in the FGCC constitution and bylaws.
 - b) If a written or verbal report has been received from any individual, who would be willing to identify his/herself, alleging that an employee of the church may have abused or threatened to abuse a child, the accused will be suspended from all duties or responsibilities with pay, pending the outcome of such investigation and until notified by the church council and subject to any written employment discipline policy process.
 - c) Any notice of suspension shall be given in a manner that will not jeopardize any investigation by the Ministry for Children and Family Service or to impede the police and shall be done in consultation with the civil authorities. Suspension from duty is not and shall not be deemed to be a presumption by the church or an admission by the individual of "guilt". The suspension of a person in the circumstances set forth will be imposed for the protection of children in our care and to demonstrate the commitment of the church, its officials, employees and volunteers.
 - d) Any personnel, volunteer or employee, found to have abused a child or placed a child at risk of abuse, shall apart from any other discipline

process, be prohibited from participation in any children's ministry in the church unless specifically authorized by the church council and then only in accordance with any and all terms and conditions determined by the church.

NOTE: In every instance, any suspected child abuse incident should be taken seriously and appropriate prompt action taken.

- ii. Response to allegations of Abuse
 - a) Allegations must always be taken seriously. The information must be immediately given to the appropriate staff member. The written report must then be given to the Senior Pastor, who is the designated spokesperson for the release of any information regarding the allegation. This includes media inquiries.
 - b) Immediately after the authorities have been notified and the victim's safety has been secured, the Senior Pastor will then contact Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada's:
 - Insurer and the local church's insurer if other than that of FGCC
 - Legal counsel
 - National office
 - c) The Senior Pastor will usually contact the parents of the victim. The accused will not be confronted until the safety of the victim has been secured. Every attempt will be made not to prejudice any party but the allegation will be taken seriously and the victim and the family will be offered compassion, support and any pastoral resources that are deemed appropriate.
 - d) In some instances, the Senior Pastor along with an elder or other church leader will contact the accused. The accused will be treated with the utmost dignity and respect when they are asked to step down until the investigation has been completed. As in the case of the victim, the accused shall be offered compassion, support and any pastoral resources that are deemed appropriate.

- e) The Senior Pastor will prepare a public statement to release to the media only on the advice of Legal Counsel. The safeguard of confidentiality for everyone involved is paramount. The statement will address the Church's concern and awareness as to the seriousness of child abuse. It will also convey our commitment to cooperating fully with the law enforcement agencies and a deep concern for victims and persons wrongfully accused.
- f) After the above mentioned consultation with Legal Counsel, the Senior Pastor may then convey the news to the congregation in a manner that protects the confidentiality of everyone involved.

C. Disclosure

1. How to handle a disclosure

- i. "The First Step" (see page 23), is provided to assist teachers and helpers with guidelines for dialogue should a child disclose an abuse incident to them. How this first step in the healing process is handled can set the tone for restoration as well as potentially affect the legal proceedings that follow. Asking leading questions and coaxing information from the child can be viewed by the court as coercion and can potentially keep the case from prosecution. All workers should familiarize themselves regularly with the contents of "The First Step".

Section IX: The First Step: (What To Do if a Child Disclosed an Abuse)

The following guidelines are provided to assist you in the event a child discloses physical or sexual abuse.

- DO immediately find a place to talk with the child that insures confidentiality (example, in the office reception area), being sensitive to the child's hesitancy to be alone with an adult.
DON'T converse where others can hear.

- DO listen carefully. Say, "It's o.k. to tell because we don't want this to hurt you anymore." Always reassure that you're listening.
DON'T respond with words, "I understand," if you are not a victim yourself. You really can't understand but you can sympathize. If you are a victim you really do understand.
- DO allow the child to show any reaction; anger, grief, crying, etc.
DON'T overreact with a shocked countenance or saying, "Oh no!"
- DO believe the child. Kids have to know you believe them.
DON'T ask, "Did this really happen?", "Are you kidding?", etc.
- DO believe that anything is possible.
DON'T minimize the situation with words like "Oh, it can't be that bad."
- DO tell the child that you feel sorry that he/she was hurt and scared and that you'll be there to help. Kids really need assurance. And if you tell the child this, please keep true to your words.
- DO trust the child.
DON'T convey the impression that the child must have done something to invite the abuse such as, "Why didn't you leave?", or "What were you doing there?"
- DO show unconditional love and care. The child needs to know and feel that you really care. "Because Jesus cares and loves you, so do I."
DON'T try to offer explanations for why this happened.
- DO be patient as the child shares.
DON'T be fidgeting, looking at your watch and not wanting to deal with it. If the child has trusted you, show that trust and love for the child.
- DO explain to the child in a loving way that you can't keep this a secret and that you need to do everything you can to see that this stops.
- DO assure the child that it is NOT their fault. The child needs to know that the adult is the one responsible not the child.

- DO pray for the child. Be sensitive about showing physical affection such as hugging. We want to offer love and support but must remember that this child has had their trust in adults violated and they might be hesitant to receive physical affection. Scriptures to pray: John 3:32, Romans 8:38, 39, Psalms 23, and Psalms 3:3,4.
- **IMPORTANT:** You must keep this information strictly confidential between you, the child and the necessary authorities. Uphold the child's dignity and trust.

Section X: Showing Kids "We Care"

Boundaries for Showing Affection

As we care for the children and youth in our ministry, it is important for us to display wisdom and discretion as we show affection. As you read the following guidelines, focus on the positive. These boundaries are designed to protect you and the kids.

Safe Hugs

Hugs are a great way to show affection! Appropriate hugs need no coercion. Some persons do not like to be hugged and we should respect their feelings. Bend down to their level. Let's keep hugs brief and avoid full body hugs. Side hugs are best! Adults should take the lead in demonstrating a side hug.

Safe Hands

High five! Use your hands to say, "I care," "You're important," or "Good job!" A handshake, a pat on the back and joining hands when we pray helps us communicate important messages. A simple boundary to remember, avoid contact with someone any place where a one piece, full trunk style bathing suit would cover. Also, except when praying or playing a game or activity, leaders should avoid holding the hands of the opposite gender. Back rubs and massages are not appropriate.

Words of Affection

Be positive, genuine and encouraging. Let your words affirm self control even in the most trying of circumstances. Always avoid any sexually suggestive comments, swearing, sarcastic or degrading remarks.

Other Suggestions

Use discretion in how you display affection. Avoid the appearances of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). The apostle Paul's encouragement to "greet each other with a holy kiss", (Romans 16:16) was an appropriate greeting for the culture of his day, but the message a kiss communicates in our culture is loaded. No kisses, except chocolate-ones. Also, be aware of your physical presence. If you are standing or sitting too close to a child and they seem to be feeling uncomfortable, just move back. Respect the feeling of others.