



# **CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HANDBOOK**

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# OUR VISION AND CORE VALUES

## VISION:

Our vision is to partner alongside with parents in discipleship and teaching children the Word of God and the rescuing power of Jesus Christ.

## CORE VALUES:

These main points encompass how we believe God has called us to operate as a ministry of Valley Life Church.

### **Gospel Centered**

First and foremost, we want everything we do in VLC Kids to point to the person and work of Jesus Christ. This includes our relationships with kids and parents, curriculum, creative classroom activities, and even our disciplinary policy. This also means we intend to serve one another out of our **Gospel Identity**, participate in **Community with other Believers**, and **Authentically Worship** Jesus, as we are on **Mission to Outsiders**.

### **Safety**

Having a safe ministry is extremely important to us. If parents don't feel safe leaving their kids with us then we may never get the chance to tell those kids about the Gospel. In order to have a safe ministry all volunteers must know, in detail, ALL Safety Policies stated in the Children's Ministries Handbook. Additionally, all volunteers must also pass a background check before serving. This helps us insure the safety of our kids, families and church.

### **Age Appropriate**

Kids learn and experience life differently than adults and our lessons, activities, and relationships must be designed to reflect that. For example, our lessons probably won't include quotes from old theologians but instead will include colorful illustrations and bible stories.

## **Fun!**

Matthew 19:14 says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." One way we hinder kids from coming to know Jesus is by communicating Jesus is some boring guy from a really old book. We want kids to look forward to coming to church. We want to teach our kids about how much fun Jesus is and about how Jesus has the most exciting story we have ever heard. This means we will constantly practice asking the Holy Spirit to give us joy and enthusiasm when talking to our kids about Jesus.

## **Partnership with Parents**

As VLC Kids volunteers our objective is never to play the role of parent to any of our kids. Instead, we want to help provide parents with the tools to talk with their children about what they learned each Sunday. One of the primary ways we do this is by establishing relationship with parents at check-in and check-out.

# **VLC KIDS ROLES & LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE**

## **FAMILY MINISTRIES PASTOR**

The Family Pastor oversees VLC Kids from a pastoral level ensuring the quality of curriculum development, volunteer care and family shepherding.

## **DEPARTMENT HEADS**

NURSERY: STEPHANIE MARRS

TODDLERS: JENNIFER SMOTHERS

PRE-SCHOOL: IONE WATKINS

K-1: AUBREY GROVE

ELEMENTARY: TYLER GROVE

Department heads oversee each program and work with Family Ministries Pastor to create age appropriate classroom environments and procedures.

## **LEAD TEACHER**

The key difference between Lead Teacher and a helper is classroom ownership. As the lead teacher, you will have the autonomy to create whatever kind of classroom environment you would like as long as it follows the provided curriculum and classroom policies and is approved by department head.

Lead Teachers will be responsible for scheduling their own classroom teachers. This means lead teachers will be responsible for contacting their teachers and helping them find coverage in the event of an absence. In addition, the lead teacher will be required to set expectations for volunteers based upon the given curriculum. It is important to note that the Lead Teacher role is not a management role but instead a discipleship role. Lead Teachers are the disciple makers of their students and fellow volunteers.

## **HELPER**

As a helper, you will be working under the supervision of the Lead Teacher. The Lead Teacher will be responsible for assigning you tasks each week to ensure a successful Sunday class period.

For the safety of VLC Kids, *ALL* helpers must submit to and pass a background check and complete a serving interview. The serving interview will be conducted by the Family Ministries Pastor.

In depth expectations of volunteers can be found under the *VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS* section of

# CLASSROOM STRUCTURE

- **Check in** - Check-in is going to be the most valuable time we have when it comes to building relationships with parents. When checking in kids, be sure to stand at the door to greet parents. This greeting time can be used to welcome them to VLC Kids, introduce yourself, and give them a brief overview of what their kids will be doing while in VLC Kids that day.
- **Welcome Stations** - Welcome stations are meant to do just that, welcome the kids, and keep them engaged and busy during the first 15 minutes of class. These stations will be set up before class and can consist of two to three different centers/tables. Examples are: Legos, card games, coloring/drawing, small arts/crafts. This will function as a time to keep the kids engaged so that there is not free time for them to find themselves in a bored situation, as boredom usually brings trouble.
- **Review Big Idea & Memory Verse** - This is the time to review the Big Idea and Memory Verse from the week before. Just like in a sermon, a pastor will often review what was preached the week before. This is also a time to quickly catch up kids who may have missed the week before or may have never been to VLC Kids.
- **Large Group Teaching** - This is another prime opportunity to model what a good listener does. Always set the expectations of the kids first.
  1. Have Fun!
  2. Keep our hands and feet to ourselves.
  3. Listen to our teachers and be respectful of others.
- **Worship** - When in worship, this is a time to model what it looks to worship God. This is not a time to stand in the back of the room. Before worshiping, set expectations for kids:
  1. We will all try our best to sing the songs

2. We will keep our hands and feet to our self

3. We will listen to the band

4. We will be respectful of others.

Once worship has begun, use this time to encourage kids to sing to God and be a part of the worship.

- **Story Time** - Story time in the Preschool class will be similar to the Large group teaching in the elementary classrooms. This will be a time for one of the teachers to tell the story and the other teachers to help make telling the story easier by encouraging kids to be on task and listening.
- **Small Group Activity/Discussion** –
  - **K-5<sup>th</sup>**: There will be an activity directly connected to the Large Group Lesson. This time is broken up into smaller groups. Discussion time will not just be a time for teachers to ask questions and kids to answer them. Instead this is a time to encourage kids to ask their own questions while also answering questions.
  - **Pre-K**: This will be craft time that coordinates with the lesson of the day.
- **Snack** - Snack is similar to prayer in that it is an important Gospel rhythm where we sit down and eat together while thanking God for providing for us.
- **Prayer** - Prayer is an important Gospel rhythm and should be put into practice during every VLC Kids class time. As teachers, we are given the opportunity to model what prayer looks like. We can always be reminding kids that prayer is simply talking to God.

- **Clean up** - No matter which classroom kids attend we want them to know cleaning up is a routine every Sunday.
- **Reflection** – This a time where all of the kids will circle up together and the lead teacher will ask reflection questions to see what the children learned from the lesson.

*At the end of class teachers will also be responsible for cleaning surfaces and toys. We want to work to the best of our ability to insure our ministry area is clean and illness free.*

# CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

## Elementary



## **First Service**

8:00 Prayer  
8:10 Set up  
8:15 Check-in opens  
8:30 Welcome  
8:50 Small Group opening  
9:00 Worship  
9:10 Large Group Bible Study  
9:20 Activity Sheet  
9:30 Small Group  
9:45 Games  
10:00 Snack and Review

## **Second Service Elementary Team**

10:00 Prayer  
10:10 Set up  
10:15 Check-in opens  
10:30 Welcome  
10:50 Small Group opening  
11:00 Worship  
11:10 Large Group Bible Study  
11:20 Activity Sheet  
11:30 Small Group  
11:45 Games  
12:00 Snack and Review

## **Kindergarten-1<sup>st</sup> Grade:**

## **First Service K-1**

8:00 Prayer

8:10 Set up table 2 top activities

8:15 check-in opens-table top activities open (not free time)

8:30 Large Group Activity 1

8:40 Circle Time: songs, main point teaching and scripture reading,  
memory verse

9:00 craft/color page

9:30 clean up/hand sanitizer for hands

9:30 snack

9:40 Large Group Activity 2 (Used to reinforce the main point of Lesson)

9:50 Large Group Review and Discussion Questions

10:00 Lesson Stations

10:15 clean up/check out

## **Second Service K-1**

10:10 Prayer

10:15 Set up table 2 top activities

10:20 check-in opens-table top activities open (not free time)

10:30 Large Group Activity 1

10:40 Circle Time: songs, main point teaching and scripture reading,  
memory verse

11:00 craft/color page

11:30 clean up/hand sanitizer for hands

11:30 snack

11:40 Large Group Activity 2 (Used to reinforce the main point of Lesson)

11:50 Large Group Review and Discussion Questions

12:00 Lesson Stations

12:15 clean up/check out

## **Preschool**

8:00 Prayer

8:15 Welcome Stations

8:50 Worship

9:15 Craft

9:35 Main Lesson

9:50 Puppet Show

10:00 Snack

10:05 Closing Activity

## **Toddlers**

8:00 Prayer

8:30 Welcome Playtime

9:00 Clean up toys and wash hands

9:05 Snack and story time

9:15 Craft

9:30 Playtime

9:45 Worship

10:00 Clean up and dismiss

# **CLASSROOM RATIOS**

NURSERY - 1 Volunteers (at least 1 adult): 3 Children

TODDLER - 1 Volunteer (at least 1 adult) : 5 Children

PRESCHOOL - 1 Volunteer (at least 1 adult): 8 Children

ELEMENTARY - 1 Volunteer (at least 1 adult): 12 Children

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

In VLC Kids we know that volunteering on a Sunday is a big sacrifice for anyone to make. Therefore, we want to make sure all volunteers have adequate time to rest and recover from the activities of a Sunday classroom. This means all volunteers are asked to serve no more than 25% of Sundays. How often you serve can be worked out in detail with your Lead Teacher.

## **Pre-service Prayer**

Each Sunday we will have an optional pre-service prayer in the area you're serving. This is a vital component of the success of our ministry and is a necessity to serving in VLC Kids. As a volunteer, it is of the utmost importance you play an active role in the success of our ministry starting with attending pre-service prayer each Sunday you serve. The pre-service prayers times are:

8 AM

10 AM

## **During Service**

Ensure all material needed is available and all activities are preplanned and set up prior to class time starting. Staying consistent with the schedule posted in class is a requirement. Keep in mind, the Lead Teacher does not need to lead the class through each segment of the class schedule.

All volunteers should remain off of their cell phones and be engaged with the children while they are in the classroom.

## **Volunteer-to-Parent Relationships**

The volunteer responsible for check-in will introduce themselves and check-in children while allowing for time to build relationships with parents. Parents will feel safe and secure dropping their children off with someone they feel like they know.

## **Dress Code**

As a volunteer in VLC Kids you are the face of the ministry and it is important for you to look presentable. Volunteers should always wear clothing that is appropriate for interacting with kids.

- **Shirt** - Our VLC Kids shirt is one of our primary identifiers for anyone who serves in VLC Kids. First, wearing your VLC Kids shirt informs the Security Team you are in fact a VLC Kids volunteer. Second, your shirt gives parents a clear identifier of who exactly is watching their children.
- **Name Tag** - Your name tag invites parents to build relationship with you by getting to know your name in the midst of a busy check-in time.

# SAFETY PROTOCOLS

## Check-In

When checking children into class, make sure their stickers have the correct date and matching numbers to parent stickers. At this time, it will also be important to ask non-regular parents if their child has any allergies or special instructions.

## Disciplinary Policy

VLC Kids follows a 3-strike disciplinary policy. Teachers will be responsible for discerning what constitutes a strike in their classroom. After a child gets two strikes their parent will be informed after church. Upon receiving the third strike parents will be called out of service and the child will not be allowed to remain in class for the remainder of that Sunday. The conversation about any third-strike incident should always include the Family Ministries Pastor.

Automatic third strikes include hitting, biting, and inappropriate touching. Automatic third strike incidents will result in parents being asked to NOT drop their child off on the following Sunday. We enforce this rule because we value the safety and comfort of all children.

## Bathroom Policy

For Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, there is a “no assistance” bathroom policy. This means if a child in K-1 or Elementary cannot use the restroom on their own, then we must call their parent to come help them. This is extremely important to communicate during drop off. However, in K-1 we do need to

accompany the child to the bathroom entry and wait for them outside. In Elementary, you need to have a clear line of site to them entering and exiting the bathroom.

For Pre-K, we have a "limited assistance" bathroom policy (i.e. help with buttons, zippers, leggings).

For Toddlers, we have an assisted bathroom policy, this means that at least two volunteers will be present in assisting the child in the bathroom or diaper change.

Parents should also know we DO change diapers in the nursery and toddler room but DO NOT in the preschool room.

When children need to use the bathroom, they must be escorted down the hallway by an adult volunteer. And two volunteers must be present if there is any assistance needed by the child. Never should a volunteer be in a bathroom stall with a child.

## **Mandatory Reporting**

You are a Mandatory Reporter. This means that if you suspect child abuse or neglect YOU must report it. Especially if a child self-reports abuse or neglect. If you are unsure, please contact the Family Ministries Pastor immediately. It is not your job to play detective, but just to simply listen and report what happen to CPS. To report child abuse/neglect call this number: 866-303-4643.

Dos and Don'ts

DO:

- Allow the child to use his/her own words to describe the incident.
- Assure the child they are not to blame for what happened
- Treat the child normally
- Take care of the child's emotional needs
- Listen and take notes
- Allow the child to talk about the incident if they bring it up
- Write down concerns and questions for CPS, police officers and therapists

- Love and support the child

#### DON'T:

- Use your language to help the child describe what happened
- Try to interview or investigate
- Overreact
- Express fear, anger and anxiety
- Initiate conversation about the incident
- Let personal feelings influence the child
- Reward child for giving information

### **Health & Cleaning**

At the end of each class period volunteers are expected to disinfect any toys or surfaces that were used during the class period. This is extremely important! If toys and surfaces are not cleaned properly we can end up with a lot of sick kids on our hands.

Additionally, if a child has been sick and is still within the infectious period we will ask parents not to drop them off that Sunday. Parents still have the option to sit with their child in the foyer or in the back of the sanctuary. Additionally, if there has been sickness circulating in schools or locally we will make an extra effort to remind parents not to drop off their sick kids.

### **Check-In**

VLC Check-In team will always greet and welcome new families and direct them to a check in station. Keep in mind, Check-In team volunteers are one of the first interactions a family has with VLC Kids on a Sunday morning. This means it is important to be welcoming and always looking for ways to help.

New families should always be directed to the New Family station for first time check-ins. During this time Check-In volunteers should explain how the check in system works and what the purposes are

for stickers and name tags.

### **VLC Kids Call**

When a parent is needed during service, the lead teacher will share the child's sticker number with the sound booth. The child's initials and corresponding number will appear on the screen in the sanctuary to alert the parent.

# **EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS**

## **Fire**

1. Activate Fire Alarm  
(if possible)
2. Call 911, if possible - Give name, location, and size of fire
3. Evacuate Building as quickly as possible to designated spot - Evacuation plan on back of the door.
4. Single file line.
5. Bring check-in tablet.
6. Once at designated place, take roll and remain until okayed to go back inside.

## **Earth Quake**

1. Duck, Cover, Hold
2. Get under a desk or table.
3. Stay away from glass windows, shelves and heavy equipment.

## **Active Shooter**



### **Nursery-1<sup>st</sup> grade:**

1. Make sure classroom door is locked.
2. Line up kids against the wall that the door is located on, remain out of site.

### **Elementary (Gym)**

1. Staff make sure kids exit (first) nearest exit and line gather at corner of Park and Ash.

### **CPR Training**

At least one volunteer per classroom will need to have a current CPR/First Aid certification or be willing obtain one. Valley Life Church will hold a CPR class once a year for certification and renewal of certification.