



Grace Kids Volunteer/Staff Handbook

Partnering with families to BUILD a community of kids
who will REACH the world for Christ as they grow



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Welcome to Grace Kids

In Grace Kids we want to partner with families to BUILD a community of kids who will REACH the world for Christ as they grow.

Dear Grace Kids volunteer,

As you begin to serve in children's ministry at GFC, I want to challenge you to think beyond our infants, our two-year-olds, our elementary kids and even our 6th graders. Think about a young man or woman who may be starting college, moving out of the house for the first time, or any of the circumstances of an eighteen year old. Then ask the question... did we equip them with a lasting and sustaining faith?

Statistics say that half of our active youth group will put their faith aside and possibly not return to it after they are adults. Half.

You are part of the fight against this sobering statistic.

- 1) You can model and teach the gospel as you live a life in response to what Christ has done for **you**.
- 2) You are one of the adults that can empower families to be the spiritual leaders in their homes.
- 3) You are a spiritual adult role model to the children we serve. They learn how to live out their faith by watching us, their faith community.
- 4) You can include them as part of the body of Christ now, not "the church of tomorrow."

Investing in our children and our families makes an eternal difference. They remember what their small group leader taught them. They appreciate the warm smile and offered hand of a security team member. Parents are fueled by gospel-centered teaching as you rock a baby. Children are engaged and challenged through worship and teaching. Children are encouraged by opportunities to serve their peers and their community.

Thank you for sharing the gospel of Christ by sharing your life with our kids!

"So we cared for you, because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."

1 Thessalonians 2:8

Jennifer Daniel
Children's Ministry Director

Volunteer Expectations

Remember these expectations. They apply to every volunteer role throughout children's ministry. These expectations may look different at each stage and a little different by role, but they remain true and core to what we want to accomplish in Grace Kids.

We want to join God in building a community of kids who will reach the world for Christ as they grow.

Whatever your role:

Be present. Why? You connect their faith to a community.

Show up predictably.

Show up mentally.

We ask that you show up 20 minutes prior to your service time.

Families begin checking in 15 minutes before service begins.

Create a safe place.

Wear your name tag.

Follow security guidelines.

Be familiar with emergency procedures. (See pages 6-7)

Be **accepting of all** children and families.

Protect yourself (see volunteer FAQs pages 3-4)

Partner with Parents.

Let them know who you are.

Honor the parent. Always.

Reinforce the family.

Make it personal.

Your role allows you to lead by example. They are watching you.

The points above have been adapted from the book, **Lead Small** by Reggie Joiner and Tom Shefchunas. If you do not have a copy, please ask a CM staff member.

Volunteer FAQs

When should I be here?

20 minutes prior to the service time. Kids begin checking in 15 minutes prior to service time, so you want to be ready to welcome them when they arrive.

Bathrooms?

Infants/Toddler: See diaper changing procedures posted in classrooms.

Pre-school: Pre-school children often need supervision and assistance going to the bathroom. Please make sure you follow the two person rule in the tips section of this handbook. Be able to be seen by another leader(pg 4).

Elementary: Elementary kids do not usually need help with bathroom related things, but on the rare occasion a student needs help-**MAKE SURE ANOTHER SMALL GROUP LEADER KNOWS WHAT IS GOING ON, AND NEVER GO IN THE BATHROOM ALONE WITH A STUDENT.** Find a staff member or point person to assist you.

Discipline?

We always feel that it is better to reward and encourage good behavior than to continually call out inappropriate behavior. We would never want to humiliate or shame a child. If a child's behavior is out of line, calmly explain why their behavior is not in their best interest and remind them of the importance of respecting their leaders and friends. If there is a continual disruption or a cause for concern, please let your area director know so that you can work together to find an appropriate solution.

Students with differing abilities?

We place a high value on all God's children and try to keep kids with differing abilities in the most inclusive environment that is in their best interest. When we know of a student with differing abilities, we will communicate with you and customize a plan. Depending on a child's needs, we may have a buddy who pairs up with them on Sunday mornings.

Food?

We regularly serve snack to preschool children but do not regularly serve snack at part of regular programming in elementary. Always follow this general guideline: If you plan to bring in special snacks for your group, you must have this approved by your area director. We will post allergy alerts for parents once approval is obtained. Also, **NEVER SERVE ANY FOOD OR DRINK TO A CHILD WITHOUT CHECKING THEIR NAME TAG FOR FOOD ALLERGIES.**

Some allergies are life threatening. Please ask a staff member if you have any questions before serving food to a child. It is best to be overly cautious.

What do I do if a child gets a minor injury?

We have accident reports for minor injuries located in your area. Ask a staff member or point person to locate one. Please fill out the form and have a service time point person sign so that we can clearly communicate the injury with parents. There is also an accessible first aid kit for each area.

Other expectations/requirements:

Two volunteer policy: Two volunteers should remain together with children at all times. If a volunteer needs to leave a group of children, please alert the point person or a staff member. We have an open door policy. If a door does not have a window installed, the door should remain open. Most of our doors have a window installed.

You are with us to help children and families feel loved and valued. When you are on your cell phone or chatting with other workers, it takes your attention away from this purpose. Please make interactions with children and families the priority during each event.

The internet is accessible to everyone—including our families. Be cautious of what you post online.

We have guidelines regarding photographing our kids. Please see a staff member for specifics before ever taking a photograph of kids.

Take a moment to review the map and evacuation routes posted in each area.

When in doubt, ask.

Children wear name badges that include their name, a family security number, allergies, and a daily security number that changes weekly. Please encourage your children to keep these on their clothing. It is critical to the check out process. Parents will have a tag with a matching security number. If you ever have a concern about a tag or a parent without a tag, please get a staff member to assist you.

Remember that the goal is to build relationships and create a welcoming atmosphere, not accomplish a task.

Volunteer Application Process

1. Application: All Grace Kids volunteers must be regular GFC attenders for a minimum of 6 months and complete a volunteer application, which includes providing references and consenting to a criminal background check.
2. Background check: Grace Fellowship Church uses, subscribes, and pays for the services of a reputable public data screening firm in order to check the background of all volunteers and employees for possible criminal history and/or registered sex offender information. Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or have been convicted of sexually oriented or sex related crimes, either misdemeanor or felony, cannot serve in any area of Grace Kids.
3. Reference check: References will be contacted and asked to assess the applicant's ability /capability for working with children.
4. Interview: All children's ministry volunteers must be willing to submit to an interview by a children's ministry staff member. This is an opportunity for us to get to know you and help you find the best opportunity to use your gifts and talents within the children's ministry of Grace Fellowship Church.

Any information obtained throughout the application process can be used to determine the suitability of your service in children's ministry.

Emergency Procedures: Medical

1. If a true emergency, immediately call 911 using your cell phone or nearest landline.

The closest landline for Pre-school—Infant/toddler counter

Elementary—Office located by check-in area

Vertical—Nearest open office

1. Designate someone to notify the point person located at the check-in computers (downstairs).
2. Point person will contact GFC's emergency medical response team in the main service and notify a staff member.
3. Staff member will call the parents.

Information for 911 dispatch:

Grace Fellowship Church

2314 S. Greenwood Drive

Johnson City, TN 37601

(423) 928-5601

Use South Entrance

(entrance facing Greenwood Drive)

Emergency Procedures: Lockdown/Tornado Shelter

1. If a situation arises where lockdown becomes necessary, a point person or staff member will alert you.
2. Stay calm, gather your class, grab your attendance sheet, and lead your group into their large group area. Pre-school will go into the interior hallway.
3. Have children sit down quickly and quietly as a group and take roll. A staff member or point person will quickly secure the area and lock all doors.
4. Stay seated and quiet until given further instruction. A staff member and point person will be connected to onsite police and will alert you when we have an "All Clear".

Emergency Procedures: Fire/Evacuation

- Stay Calm.
- Alarm types:
 - Fire/Emergency Alarms loud with flashing lights and automated audio voice direction.
 - Door alarms: loud alarms but you will see no flashing lights (stay in room and send one small group leader to point person at computer check-in unless given other instructions).
- If it is a Fire/Emergency alarm, gather your class, **grab your attendance clipboard**, and lead kids to the designated exit. Wait for a point person or staff member to proceed outside. If you see fire or smoke, do not wait before exiting the building.
- Lead class to the designated meeting space for your area.
 - Pre-school—grassy area by the pine tree line past the west parking lot.
 - Elementary—grassy area by the South Greenwood parking lot.
 - 5th and 6th grade—grassy area by the South Greenwood parking lot.
- One leader in front, one leader in back to make sure all kids stay together.
- Do NOT allow parents to check out their kids as you travel to grassy area (we will need an accurate count to ensure all children are out of the building safely)
- Once your class is in the grassy area, have them form a circle and sit down to listen to your instructions. Children need to stay seated and quiet.
- Call roll from your attendance sheet and send one small group leader to staff member to check in and let staff member know that your class is accounted for. The other small group leader should stay with your class.
- Wait for a staff member to give instructions to parents about pick-up procedures:
 - A Staff Member will ask parents to stand on the pavement and form lines with their pick-up tags as kids will be picked up one at a time in each grade.
 - Parents will line up by grade, and you will become our security team. One small group leader should remain with children and another will come to the pavement to match the code on each parent's pick-up tag with the code on the child's name tag. Hand them back their pick-up tag so they can pick up their other children.

Lead Small Leader Training

Thank you for saying “yes” to our next generation. Thank you for offering to share your time with our children so that you can show God’s love in a real and tangible way.

Below are the videos available on our website at gfcnow.com/leadsmall. They are designed to help you better understand why we think small groups are so important at GFC. Please check them off as you watch them and sign the bottom of the page.

_____ **Lead Small 1: Introduction**

_____ **Lead Small 2: Be Present**

_____ **Lead Small 3: Create a Safe Place**

_____ **Lead Small 4: Make It Personal**

_____ **Lead Small 5: Partner with Parents**

_____ **Lead Small 6: Move them Out**

_____ **Child Abuse Prevention by Jennifer Daniel, GFC Children’s Ministry Director**

_____ I have watched the videos and am ready to serve.

_____ I have watched the videos and would like to talk to someone before I serve.

Signature

Date

Volunteer Handbook

Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of the Grace Kids Volunteer Handbook and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by the guidelines while serving at Grace Fellowship Church.

I understand that the handbook may be modified , and that any guideline may be amended, revised or eliminated by Grace Fellowship Church.

I understand that it is my responsibility to review any new guidelines that may be created and distributed.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Director of Children's Ministry

Date