

Weekday Education Policy Manual

At First Denton Weekday Education (FDWE), we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for FDWE staff members. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

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

Sincerely,

First Denton Weekday Education Director

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Overview of First Denton Safety System

Because we care for students and desire to protect them, First Denton requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

Step 1: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete First Denton's Screening Process, which includes:

- an Employment Application (employees only)
- a Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
- a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- references to be checked (employees and volunteers)

*A volunteer must attend First Denton for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children. Exceptions may be granted by the Safety Team for new members transferring by letter or individuals who are active members of other local churches. These exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis and will require that in their references they have at least one called minister from their home church. This reference should have personal knowledge of the individual's work with children in a church setting for a period longer than six months.

Step 2: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

First Denton 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 First Denton Safety Team. 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, **First Denton requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training.** This training will be renewed every two years.

Step 3: 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 4: Criminal Background Check

First Denton requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

Child Safety Policy

Abuse Tolerance

First Denton has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at First Denton 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 and the Children's Minister or the Executive Pastor/Business Administrator.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

First Denton 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.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the First Denton Safety Committee.

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 and the Children's Minister or the Executive Pastor/Business Administrator.

Enforcement of Policies

First Denton staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all First Denton policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary

action, or reassignment from positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the First Denton Safety Team.

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 the Weekday Education Director, the Children's Minister, and/or the Executive Pastor/Business Administrator.

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 Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at First Denton. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from First Denton.

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 activities involving children or students at First Denton.

Reporting Suspicions of Abuse to Law Enforcement Agencies

Staff members and volunteers at First Denton are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to an immediate supervisor or the First Denton Safety Team.

Texas law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency. All staff members of the First Denton Weekday Preschool Education program are considered "mandatory reporters" under state law. As such, they will immediately notify an immediate supervisor or Administrator of any inappropriate behavior. Together with the immediate supervisor or Administrator, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate Texas authorities. In no way does

any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate Texas authorities.

Response to Report of Abuse

The First Denton Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the Program when a report of abuse occurs.

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported in accordance with this policy to the First Denton Safety Team. If appropriate, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-5400), or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680) will be notified. For more information regarding responsibilities to report suspicions of abuse or neglect, see the Employee Handbook.

When A Child Has Been Victimized

If a staff member or volunteer has knowledge or a suspicion that a child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the information will be reported to supervisory staff and the appropriate authorities as outlined above.

In addition to notifying the appropriate authorities (if required), First Denton will provide the child or the child's parent/caregiver/guardian with information to allow the child (or parent, on the child's behalf) to obtain assistance and intervention, as well as available counseling options.

Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guideline

Nursery-Age Children

Because very young children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

1. Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.

2. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
3. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
4. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”)
5. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
6. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet Training

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. Only female nursery workers or the child’s parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
3. When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
4. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
5. Parents should be consulted on each child’s progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card (“Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”).
6. Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present, when possible.
7. “Accidents” should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the children’s area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

School Age Children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Special Needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals.

Medication

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member with a doctor's prescription. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

Gift Giving

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing special gifts to any individual child. Special occasions or special accomplishments should receive group acknowledgement and can easily be rewarded with group recognition (i.e., mention during announcements; have the entire group sing Happy Birthday, etc.) Any requests for variance from this policy must be addressed to the Weekday Education Director.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in the facility, during a Program activity, or while working with children at First Denton (see the Drug Abuse Policy). Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing alcohol or illegal drugs to children.

Tobacco

First Denton is a tobacco-free facility. First Denton requires staff members and volunteers to refrain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility, and while in the presence of children or their parents. First Denton staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing tobacco products to children.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers at First Denton should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

One-To-One Interactions with Children

First Denton recognizes that meeting program objectives may occasionally require that staff members and volunteers interact with children on an individual basis. Workers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with children:

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual child at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. There will be no one-to-one meetings between a staff member or a volunteer and a child behind a closed door. If a circumstance arises where a private one-to-one meeting does occur, the staff member or volunteers will notify the First Denton Safety Team immediately before or after the meeting.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers for the Weekday Education Program will not provide transportation for children. All transportation to and from the school must be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

Parental Contact

Parents who leave their children in the care of First Denton staff members and volunteers for services and activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in First Denton activities.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to be a part of any and all services and programs in which children are involved at First Denton (see Handbook). A parent accompanied by a child to any First Denton program or activity is responsible for their child's safety.

Volunteers Parents

A parent who desires to participate in such a way as to have ongoing contact with children in the Program other than his/her own will be considered a Volunteers Parent. All Volunteer Parents will be required to complete First Denton's Volunteer Parent Application.

Physical Contact

First Denton is committed to protecting the children in our care. The Program has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of First Denton staff members or volunteers must foster trust at all times – personal conduct must be above reproach. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in First Denton programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in the First Denton setting.
2. Physical affection should be appropriate to the child's age. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection should be immediately reported to the First Denton Safety Team.
3. Physical contact and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children or First Denton staff and volunteers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when more than two individuals are present, and the touch is open to observation.
4. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

Release of Children

At the end of the program day or activity, First Denton staff members are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated in writing by parents or legal guardians.

In the event that a staff member or volunteer is uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, he/she should immediately locate or contact the Weekday Education Director before releasing the child.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children. Staff members and volunteers 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. This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging and online chat rooms.

Possession of Sexually Oriented Materials

First Denton staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, etc.) on Program property or in the presence of children. If any such materials are purportedly necessary for classroom instruction, they must be approved in advance by the First Denton Safety Team.

Internet/Electronic Media

No computer at or related to First Denton is to be used by staff members, volunteers, children or volunteers to engage in computer chat room discussions or visit pornographic or sexually inappropriate websites. Violation of this policy will lead to discipline from the First Denton Safety Team. Any questions about inappropriate use of computers or the suitability of a particular website should be discussed with the First Denton Safety Team.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. First Denton staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission to provide nurturing care to children. Staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.