

encounterKIDS Vision

Leading kids in the way of Jesus while equipping families to both BE and MAKE disciples

Core Values

Truth-Based

We believe that God's word is foundational truth, and it is our heart to train every kid to use it as their guide, authority, and conscience in everything.

Nurturing

EncounterKIDS seeks to be a physically, emotionally and spiritually safe environment for children.

Child-Centered

We look at everything we do through the eyes of a child.

Creative & Innovative

We use a variety of ways to get the message across to inspire the kids to greatness by remaining biblical, relevant, and effective.

Relational

Life change happens best in the context of relationships... even for children.

Adventurous

Kids like to have fun and we strive to be creative and inspiring as we accomplish our mission by nurturing and teaching them spiritually.

Volunteer Application Process

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Encounter requires all volunteers working with children to complete the following volunteer steps.

1. Application

All children's ministry volunteers must complete the Volunteer Application, including providing references and signing the Consent to Background Check.

2. Reference Check

All references will be contacted and asked to assess the applicant's suitability/capability for working with children.

3. Policies & Procedures

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.

4. Criminal History Check

Encounter 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 an any area of children's ministry. Encounter utilizes a comprehensive background check and relies upon the truthful answers of applicants and their references for this information.

5. Follow-Up

All Children's Ministry volunteers will meet with the Director for the purpose of plugging you into a role in encounterKIDS.

Policies & Procedures

Protection Policy

All encounterKIDS teachers must be a partner of Encounter. Teaching assistants may be members-in-process. Approved students under age 16 may serve with their parent or a mentor. All assistants must have completed a thorough application, submitted to a criminal background/reference check, and have been asked to serve by a member of the encounterKIDS leadership team. In the event that there are last-minute assistants who have not been screened, they will be approved by a staff member and placed with a teacher that has been background checked.

Please also see the Appendix regarding the Protection Policy.

Check-In/Out Procedures

All children must check in at the check-in desk before entering the classroom. Check-in begins 30 minutes before the service, but classrooms do not open until 9:45. Volunteers with children must keep their children with them until 9:45, when the classrooms open. Check-in closes 15 minutes following the start of the service. Classrooms close after the Worship Gathering at 11:45.

- Encourage parents to take their children to the restroom prior to bringing them to their class.
- There will always be 2 people at the check-in desk. When a first time guest comes up to the desk, have them step aside and complete the "Connection Card". Once the card is filled out, make a label for each child and their parent with the designated marker.
- When a child is brought to the room, the following procedures are used:

Check-In Procedures

Greet each family at the door.

***Be aware of and note of any allergies.**

Label any belongings with labels or masking tape.

Check-Out Procedures

Make sure that the parent tag number matches the child tag number (if a parent has lost his or her tag, find a staff member to handle the situation. DO NOT RELEASE A CHILD WITHOUT A MATCHING NUMBER).

Policies & Procedures

Wellness Procedure

To ensure the health of children and volunteers, we ask that sick children do not attend encounterKIDS. The Committee on Control of Infectious Disease of the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child should not leave home when any of the following symptoms exist:

- Fever (over 100.5 degrees) within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox or whooping cough
- Common cold from onset through one week
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infections: boils, ringworm or impetigo
- Untreated pink eye or other eye infection
- Any communicable disease
- Lice, including the presence of eggs or nits

Medication

We do not dispense any medications to a child. If a child appears to be ill, isolate the child and call an encounterKIDS leader to contact the parent. Be ready to give the child's name.

Accident Procedure

These injuries may be and are not limited to:

- A significant size bump or bruise
- A bite that may or may not have drawn blood
- The inability to move a part of the body (arm, leg, finger, etc)

What to do:

If a non-life threatening accident occurs, please contact an encounterKIDS leader.

Classroom Procedures

Nursery Diapering Policy

It is required that the person changing diapers be an adult female, partner of Encounter. To provide the best care for the children, please check the diapers of all infants and toddlers.

When changing diapers, please do the following:

- Diapering is done at diaper stations.
- If possible, diapering should be done within eyesight of other caregivers.
- Have all supplies ready before placing the child on the changing table.
- Once the child is placed on the table, put on disposable gloves.
- Always be attentive, keeping one hand on the child.
- When the new diaper is on, place sticker on diaper that says "this diaper was changed with love" and put the child back with the group. Dirty diapers are to be sealed in provided bags. Wipe down changing pad with germicidal wipes and throw away gloves. Wash and sanitize your hands.

NOTE: Jr. Helpers are not to change diapers.

3's/4's - K's Bathroom Policy

It is required that the person assisting a child in the restroom be an adult female, partner of Encounter. To provide the best care for the children, please adhere to the following procedures:

- If a diaper needs to be changed in the 3's, the assistant will escort the child to the nursery where the nursery staff will change the diaper. The above diaper changing procedures will be followed. Diapers will be changed on an as needed basis.
- Prior to children entering the restroom, the teacher needs to check to ensure no one is present and prop the door open. Other church goers will be asked to wait until the children are finished using the restroom.
- When a child is using the restroom, never leave him/her unattended. Stand outside the door.
- If the child requests help, leave the door open and assist him/her.
- Always wash your hands and child's hands with soap and water after the child has used the toilet.
- The parent will be notified at pick up that their child used the restroom that day.

A child of any age is never to be punished or shamed for toileting accidents. When a child who is toilet-trained has a significant accident, quietly contact an encounterKIDS leader to call the parent. (Let parents know that we call all parents so they can assist their child and comfort them.)

Classroom Procedures

School Age Bathroom Policy

It is required that the person assisting in taking the children to the bathroom be a partner of Encounter. To provide the best care for the children, please adhere to the following procedures:

- Prior to children entering the restroom, the teacher needs to check to ensure no one is present.
- When a child is using the bathroom, never leave him/her unattended. Stand outside the door and other church goers will be asked to wait until the children are finished using the restroom.

Crying Children

Crying children need care and compassion. When crying is not due to obvious concerns (child hurt or sick), please tend to their immediate needs.

Solutions for meeting the needs of a crying child: (Depending on their age, this will vary)

- Check diaper changing or hunger needs.
- Check if child desires to be picked up.
- Offer the child an activity such as art or quiet reading.
- Reassure the child that his/her parents will return.
- Three volunteers must try to console the child before paging the parent.

In the nursery, the parent will be asked their comfort limit at check-in. Once the determined threshold has been met, contact the parent. In all other classrooms, parents will be called if the child cannot be comforted enough to participate in the lesson.

Food Policy

Feeding young children is a serious responsibility. Children should be fed prior to coming to the classroom. Infants will be given formula, milk, or juice when parents provide these items with written instructions on the feeding instructions form. In the nursery, a snack will be provided along with water. Any and all allergies need to be written on the feeding instructions form.

Teachers, please limit sweet snacks to 2 small pieces.

Discipline Policy

Ways to avoid problem behaviors:

- Come prepared by **PRAYING** before the childcare begins.
- Be sensitive to the moods of the children in the group.
- Set clear and age appropriate expectations with the children.

When Kids Require Discipline or Guidance:

- Use a firm but gentle voice to address the behavior.
- Remove the child from the activity.
- Focus your remarks on the behavior you want to see; "Please walk" or "Please listen" **not** "Stop running" or "Be quiet".
- Do not use words or a tone of voice that shames or frightens a child/student.
- Do not use sarcasm or scream at a child/student.
- Never make remarks that put down the individual as a person or make negative references about appearance, race, or gender.
- Never use corporal punishment or spanking of any kind.
- Use touch in affirming ways: Appropriate examples: high fives, pat on the back or shoulders, etc... Inappropriate examples: demanding/expecting hugs, slapping on buttocks, kissing, etc...
- Contact the encounterKIDS staff if assistance is needed.
- If necessary, a confidential parental discussion will occur with the encounterKIDS volunteer, encounterKIDS staff or elder, parent and child.

Discipline in the Classroom

We hope that all children will enjoy their time at Encounter; however there are times when disciplinary actions are needed. We utilize a 4-step progressive discipline approach with the ultimate goal to keep or return the student in all activities. Below are a few basic guidelines that we will follow.

Step 1: When a student moves outside established guidelines, a verbal warning will be given.

Step 2: When a student moves outside established guidelines a second time, the student will be pulled aside and a 2nd verbal warning will be given along with a restating of the guideline that has been broken.

Step 3: If a child continues to choose behavior outside of established guidelines, then they will be removed from the current activity where the Children's Director or elder will sit down with the student and discuss what has happened and how might the student be returned to class time. Many times this is the maximum amount of discipline needed. Once a student has 2 occurrences of discipline, the parents will be contacted.

Step 4: If after the above three steps have been taken, the student continues to choose "Out-of-Bounds" behavior, then the student will be taken to their parents. It will be necessary for the parents and the student to meet together with the leaders involved in the progressive discipline process to help develop a pathway of return for the student.

When Physical Aggression Occurs:

1st Offense: When a child shows aggressive behavior, he/she should be separated from the group and given a verbal warning by the teacher.

2nd Offense: When a child shows a second aggressive behavior, a member of the Encounter Staff should be called and they will speak to the child.

3rd Offense: If there is a third incident of aggressive behavior that occurs during the same class, the parents will be called by an encounterKIDS staff member and the child will be removed from the classroom depending on the severity.

If another child is injured, both parents should be notified immediately.

Technology Policy

Regarding the use of technology in your classroom, please adhere to the following policy:

- Outside of preparing for your lesson, please be attentive in your classroom and do not use social media.
- Do not, at any time, take pictures of the children or post the pictures to social media without the consent of their parents.
- If you plan to use additional technology/videos, it must be forwarded to the Children's Director prior to use.

Junior Helpers

Being a Junior Helper is a privilege. Based upon maturity and helpfulness in their own classroom will they be asked to help in other areas.

- Junior Helpers must complete the Volunteer Application.
- The Children's Director will meet with the child and parent(s) to review the application and go over the expectations of a Junior Helper.
- Junior Helpers will work with their parent or mentor for the first 6 months/ 3 rotations. After 6 months a review will take place. Based upon the outcome of the review the Junior Helper would be allowed to serve without the supervision of their parent.
- Junior Helpers will work under the supervision of staff or adult volunteers at all times.
- Junior Helpers should remain in their assigned classroom until the end of the service.
- Junior Helpers must adhere to the same expectations as adult volunteers.
- Junior Helpers are not to serve in the nursery.
- A Junior Helper is between the ages of 12-16.
- At the age of 16 the Junior Helper is promoted to a Teachers Assistant.

Opportunities for a Junior Helper:

- Serve in 4's - K's Classrooms.
- Serve at Check-In desk escorting first time guests with children to their classrooms.
- Serve before and after the service assisting younger children with activities in the café area.

Expectations for our Children's Ministry Workers:

- **Live a God-centered life.** Consistent Bible reading and prayer and being held accountable by one or more persons.
- **Love children.** Passionate about reaching them with God's Word and with His love.
- **Be a good teacher.** Able to present the truth in an age-appropriate and interactive way and able to maintain order and discipline in the classroom.
- **Responsible.** Punctuality is key! Always be on time, keep the established rules, take care of church resources, and communicate openly and honestly with leadership.
- **Cooperative.** Adhere to all the screening and training processes established by the church leadership.
- **Be Spiritually Fed.** In order to feed and teach our children the Word of God, a children's worker must also be fed and taught through fellowship groups, Bible studies, and Worship Gatherings.