

CH KIDS & STUDENTS

SAFETY POLICIES & PROCEDURES



To leaders serving with CH Kids and Students:

The safety and well-being of children and students involved in and serving in our ministries is vitally important and something we take seriously. We want to provide a safe and loving environment for children and students in order to help them find and follow Jesus. To accomplish this goal, we have established these policies and procedures to not only protect children and students but also volunteers and the mission of Colonial Hills Church Hernando.

All leaders should know that these guidelines and procedures will be strictly enforced and that all volunteers and staff are expected to abide by them. After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign the agreement on the last page and turn it into the staff member overseeing your ministry area.

Sincerely,
CH Kids and CH Students

Colonial Hills Church Hernando requires that all individuals who have expressed interest in working with kids or students complete the onboarding process before stepping into a serving role:

STEP ONE: SCREENING PROCESS

Potential leaders must complete the online volunteer application with references. A leader must be an active member of Colonial Hills Church Hernando (completed membership requirements of: attended exploring membership class, submitted story, baptism, and completed membership covenant) or pursuing membership.

STEP TWO: BACKGROUND CHECK AND INTERVIEW

Colonial Hills requires that all leaders who wish to serve in CH Kids or CH Students must undergo a criminal background check. **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 ministry with minors.**

Once potential leaders have a completed background check on file with the church, the potential leader will have an interview with church and ministry leadership. The interview process can be subjective, however our family ministry team will maintain high level expectations on potential leaders. During or after the interview, family ministry leadership may determine that the individual serving in CH Kids or CH Students is not conducive at the time and will work to help them find other areas within the church to serve.

STEP THREE: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Potential leaders are required to review the policies and procedures in this manual and sign the agreement on the last page indicating that they have read and understand the material and agree to comply with all requirements presented within.

STEP FOUR: SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

Leaders should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors for 'grooming' a victim for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a victim, win the victim's trust, manipulate the victim into sexual activity, and keep the victim from disclosing the abuse. All leaders are required to complete Sexual Abuse Awareness Training before stepping into family ministry leadership roles. Leaders will do this training every two years to ensure up to date training.

STEP FIVE: OBSERVATION

If volunteers complete all preceding steps, they will enter into an observation stage. During this stage, volunteers will observe weekly programming in the ministry area they plan to serve in for a predetermined period of time. Once the observation stage is complete, ministry leadership will discuss next steps and full involvement in ministry programming.

There are kids and students within Colonial Hills Church that carry wounds from abuse and traumatic experiences. Recognizing these wounds is the first step toward healing. According to the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, there are four main categories of abuse: emotional and verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect.

- **Emotional and Verbal Abuse:** anything said or done that is hurtful or threatening to a child and is the most challenging form of maltreatment to identify. Examples include: name-calling (“You’re stupid”), belittling (“I wish you were never born”), destroying child’s possessions or pets, threatens to harm child or people they care about (“I’m going to choke you” or “I’ll break your arm”), locking a child in a closet or box, rejecting a child, or isolating a child
- **Sexual Abuse:** any inappropriate touching by a friend, family member, anyone having ongoing contact, and/or a stranger. Examples include: touching a child’s genital area, any penetration of a child, allowing a child to view or participate in pornography, prostitution (selling your child for money, drugs, etc.), forcing a child to perform oral sex acts, masturbating in front of a child, or having sex in front of a child.
- **Physical Abuse:** any contact that results in bodily harm, such as bruising, abrasions, broken bones, internal injuries, burning, missing teeth, and skeletal injuries. Examples include: hitting or slapping a child with an extension cord, hands, belts, fists, broom handles, or brushes, putting child into hot water, cutting the child with a knife or any other sharp object, shaking or twisting arms or legs or yanking a child by the arm, putting tape over a child’s mouth, tying a child up with rope or cord, or throwing a child across a room or down the stairs.
- **Neglect** means not meeting the basic needs of the child and is the most common form of maltreatment:
 - Medical* - not giving a child life-sustaining medicines, over-medicating, and not obtaining special treatment devices deemed necessary by a physician.
 - Supervision*– leaving child/children unattended and leaving child/children in the care of other children too young to protect them (depending upon the maturity of the child)
 - Clothing and Hygiene*– dressing children inadequately for weather and persistent skin disorders resulting from improper hygiene
 - Nutrition* – lack of sufficient quantity or quality of food, letting a child consistently complain of hunger, and allowing the child to rummage for food.
 - Shelter* – having structurally unsafe housing, inadequate heating, and unsanitary housing conditions.

Abuse can be recognized in the following ways:

- The abuse is stated verbally to a leader by a kid/student.
- The abuse is received in writing from a kid/student.
- Signs of abuse are evident on a kid/student (bruises, burns, etc.)
- A leader personally witnesses abuse to a kid/student
- A leader observes behaviors and/or signs that may indicate a kid/student being mistreated physically, emotionally, and/or sexually.
- A leader suspects a person is attempting to build a relationship with a kid/student for an impure purpose or to harm them.

ZERO TOLERANCE

Colonial Hills Church Hernando supports and maintains a zero-tolerance policy concerning child abuse and neglect. It is the responsibility of every leader to act in the best interest of the kids and students within our ministry. It is a violation of both state law and Colonial Hills policies for any volunteer or staff member to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect any child or student. It is also the responsibility of every volunteer and staff member to report abuse or neglect that has been observed or abuse or neglect that the volunteer or staff member has been made aware of.

Any report of inappropriate behaviors, abuse, or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and handled promptly and appropriately.

Volunteers should always contact a ministry leader on staff at Colonial Hills Church Hernando when any of the following has occurred:

- A report, implication, or suspicion of physical or sexual abuse
- A report of drug or alcohol abuse by a kid/student or kid's/student's family member
- A divorce or separation of parents of a kid/student
- A report of outburst of anger by a kid/student or kid's/student's family member
- A report of self-harm or threats of suicide by a kid/student or kid's/student's family member
- A death in the family of a kid/student
- Any observed, implied, or suspected policy violation or inappropriate behavior by a leader

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

According to the Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services, any known or suspected child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, human trafficking of minors, infants affected by substance abuse, and child fatalities are to be reported to state officials. A person who has not reached their 18th birthday is considered a child. According to state law of Mississippi, all clergy, ministers, and ministry volunteers are mandatory reporters. Any volunteer or staff member who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused is required to make a report with the Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services.

If a leader has cause to believe that abuse or neglect has or will occur:

1: Leaders are obligated to report such abuse or neglect to CH Kids or CH Students staff, who will walk leaders through the process of reporting such abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Reports can be made to MSDCPS via telephone at 1-800-222-8000 or online at <https://reportabuse.mdcps.ms.gov/> All reports of child abuse should be made promptly, thoroughly, and taken seriously.

2: All information reported should be kept confidential and only disclosed to Colonial Hills Church Hernando staff, CH Kids staff or CH Students staff, and the proper authorities. Any reports of abuse or neglect should not be the subject of gossip or discussed with friends, other volunteers, or any others.

3: According to MS state law, any person reporting suspected child abuse or neglect in good faith shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed.

While not required for state law reporting purposes, please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect, any inappropriate behavior, or any grooming behaviors to the Colonial Hills staff or team leader over the ministry area you are serving in. This request is intended to help assist the church in protecting minors across all Colonial Hills ministries. Colonial Hills leadership will promptly follow up on reports of abuse, suspected abuse, or inappropriate behaviors, and appropriate action will be taken including contacting authorities if necessary and filing a report with the Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services. Colonial Hills will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations and will minister to all involved parties while cooperating with authorities.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Colonial Hills staff who supervise leaders are charged with the diligent enforcement of all of Colonial Hills' policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate removal from leadership with Colonial Hills Family Ministries. Even suspicions or accusations of acts considered to be harmful to a kid or student may result in a leader being prohibited from current and/or future participation in CH Kids or CH Students. If a policy is violated by a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in the termination of employment with Colonial Hills Church. Final decisions related to policy violations and corrective action will be the responsibility of Colonial Hills Hernando staff and senior leadership.

INTERACTIONS WITH KIDS/STUDENTS

Colonial Hills Church desires to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all children, students, volunteers, and staff involved in family ministry. As a precaution and to ensure safety and accountability, leaders, staff, and volunteers must follow these policies:

NEVER ALONE POLICY

CH Kids

No kid should ever be left unattended or unsupervised during activities or events hosted by CH Kids. Leaders are prohibited from being alone with an individual kid outside of the view of others. In the event a leader finds himself or herself alone with a kid, that leader should immediately move to another location where others are present. After every event, leaders must ensure that every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving. Any two kids together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another location where others are present.

CH Students

No student should ever be left unattended or unsupervised during activities or events hosted by CH Students. Leaders are prohibited from being alone with an individual student outside of the view of others. In the event that a leader finds himself or herself alone with a student, that leader should immediately move to another location where others are present. After every event, leaders must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving. Any two students in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another location where others are present.

Leaders may occasionally minister to students on an individual basis. In these moments, leaders should conduct one-on-one meetings with a student at a location where others are present. Leaders should never visit a student in the student's home without a parent present. Leaders should not host a student in their home without parental consent and other people present. Leaders should completely avoid one-to-one meetings or communication including phone calls, text messages, and direct messages, with students of the opposite sex.

Video Surveillance

Video surveillance equipment is present on Colonial Hills Hernando Campus. Leaders acknowledge that video surveillance is being recorded for security purposes and the protection of all kids, students, and leaders on site. All ministry with minors should take place in areas that have video surveillance.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS, TABACCO, VAPING, ETC.

Leaders are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or any illegal drugs while on Colonial Hills property, traveling with kids/students, or while working with or supervising kids/students.

NUDITY

Leaders should never be nude in the presence of kids or students. Kids and students should never be nude in the presence of leaders. In the event there is a situation that may call for the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes due to an accident, changing clothes to go swimming, showering in a communal bathroom such as a camp or retreat center, or changing clothes during an overnight retreat, etc.) leaders should make arrangements for showering or changing clothes at a time and place out of view of kids and student. Privacy should be prioritized and respected.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Colonial Hills is committed to protecting kids and students in its care and recognizes that appropriate physical affection and touch is part of a positive, nurturing environment in a healthy ministry.

- Pats on the back, high fives, fist bumps, and handshakes are generally acceptable in ministry settings.
- Allow the kid or student to initiate hugs. Kids ministry may engage in brief hugs. Student ministry may engage in side hugs.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the kids and students and never be based on the emotional needs of a leader.

- Physical contact in any form should not give the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of leaders must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other kids, students, or leaders. It is less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical touch is open to observation.
- Leaders should not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a kid or student. A kid's/student's preference to not be touched must be respected.
- Leaders are responsible for protecting kids and students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including from other students.

DISCIPLINE

Leaders are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of kids and students. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, push-ups, running, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction of inappropriate behavior by kids/students.

If a kid/student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from leaders, that kid/student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the kids/students parent will be contacted to pick them up. In the event of a fight or physical altercation between kids/students, leaders should first seek to verbally redirect those involved and try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to a ministry leader on staff with Colonial Hills Church.

TABOO TOPICS

CH Kids

Certain topics of discussion are best left for parents and their kids. A non-exclusive list of such topics is below. If a leader has questions about the appropriateness of discussing a particular topic, the leader should contact a CH Kid's staff member.

- The rapture
- The tribulation
- Satan - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion
- Hell - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion
- Denominations
- Speaking in tongues
- Reproduction
- Female menstruation cycle
- Personal testimonies related to drugs, alcohol, or other questionable moral behavior.

CH Students

Leaders are prohibited from engaging in sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships or sexual activities with any students. It is expected that from time to time discussions and lessons may address age appropriate issues related to purity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will convey Biblical truth and view on these topics. All parents of students will be notified in advance of these lessons. In all conversations with students, wisdom should be utilized.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between leaders, kids, and students should be positive and uplifting. Leaders should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging and constructive. Leaders should not talk to kids or students in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, leaders are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of kids and students. (Ephesians 4:29)

SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Serving with kids and students provides the opportunity to build trust with them. With trust comes the possibility of shepherding and guiding them through difficult situations. **However, leaders should never promise confidentiality to kids or students or agree to keep something secret.** Leaders should always clearly communicate to kids and students that what they share with their leaders will be shared with others if it is determined that is the best way to love, help, and protect them. The most likely people leaders would share information with would be parents and Colonial Hills staff.

Things that cannot be kept confidential include:

- Abuse to or neglect of a student
- Student abusing others
- Student intention to harm themselves or harm others
- Any illegal behavior or situation that is illegal
- Sexual activity including accessing or engaging with pornography

Communicate any of the above to the Colonial Hills staff member over your ministry.

PARENT INCLUSION

Parents who leave a kid/student in the care of Colonial Hills leaders during church services or activities should be contacted immediately if their kid/student becomes ill, injured, inconsolable, a danger to himself/herself or others, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in CH Kids or CH Students programming.

Parents are welcome to visit any and all CH Kids or CH Students programming in which their kid or student is involved. For the safety of kids/students, parents must first contact the Colonial Hills staff member over the ministry or event their student is participating in and receive permission before attending. Parents are required to complete a background check before visiting any CH Kids programming or events.

Parents who desire to observe, participate in, or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's ministry programming will be required to complete the volunteer application and screening process for that team.

LEADER CONDUCT IN DAILY LIFE

Leaders involved in Colonial Hills ministries are expected to display the highest Christian values and morals in every area of their daily life and “strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.” (Acts 24:16) Leaders are expected to provide a good example for the kids and students in our ministries and not engage in behaviors that could lead kids and students into inappropriate conduct themselves. If kids/students can see it on social media, leaders are sending them a message. If it is possible that leaders could be observed in a public place, they should assume young eyes are watching. Leaders should “...put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with [their] ministry...” (2 Corinthians 6:3, 1 Corinthians 10:23-33)

Leaders should ask the following questions when considering activities in their personal life:

- Could it cause confusion, disillusionment, or disharmony with kids, students, parents, or other leaders?
- Could it cause the ministry of Colonial Hills to be discredited?
- Could it cause my personal ministry to be discredited?
- How would I explain my behavior to kids, students, parents, and/or Colonial Hills leadership?

Examples of conduct that is unacceptable for family ministry leaders include:

- Engaging in same sex relationships
- Cohabitation
- Addiction to or consumption of pornography
- Alcoholism and substance abuse

Leaders or potential leaders who are engaging in such conduct are not permitted to serve with minors.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Leaders, kids, and students are to avoid all behaviors listed below. Leaders are responsible to maintain these standards within their classrooms/small groups. Colonial Hills Church Hernando should be a safe place and all speech and conduct should be above reproach. If a leader notices that any of these behaviors are becoming a problem within their classroom or group, please contact a staff member of CH Kids or CH Students.

- No comments or jokes that may have a sexual innuendo
- No language that is suggestive, off-color, lewd, or otherwise inappropriate
- No conversations or jokes about private body parts
- No homosexual innuendoes of any kind. No gay or lesbian jokes, jokes about cross dressing, transgenderism, or homosexual slurs
- No racial jokes, slurs, or racial put downs
- No cursing or inappropriate slang
- Never do anything in the nude or in underwear (mooning, skinny-dipping, etc.)
- No pantsing or anything involving putting hands on another person's clothing
- No physical touching or activity that might produce an appearance of impropriety
- Never engage in any activity that would hurt a person directly or personal property
- Do not give gifts or special privileges to a specific kid/student. This is common grooming behavior of sexual predators

CH KIDS ADDENDUM

Along with the preceding Colonial Hills Kids, Students, and Family Ministry policies, there are some specifics to address with CH Kids.

SECURITY / STRANGERS

Only kids ministry volunteers, Colonial Hills staff and elders, parents/guardians, and kids are allowed in the Kids Ministry area. All other adults (including church members, deacons, and volunteers in other ministries) should be asked for identification and escorted out of the kids ministry area.

CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT

Kids must have either a printed or handwritten check-in sticker to be admitted to a classroom.

Kids may not be released unless a parent/guardian has the check-in sticker that corresponds to the sticker on the child.

RESTROOMS

No adults, volunteers, staff, or students in 6th grade or up are permitted to use the restrooms in the Kids Ministry area.

For kids who need assistance:

- Only female leaders over 18 years of age can provide direct assistance.
- Must have 2 adults present. (A male leader can be the 2nd adult present but must never assist the child directly)
- Leaders should always wear gloves when providing direct assistance.

For kids who do not require assistance:

- Leaders should check the restroom to ensure the restroom is empty prior to allowing the kids to enter.
- Leaders will step out of the restroom while the kid goes to the restroom and will not let another kid into the restroom until the kid is finished.

LAP SITTING

No males may have a kid in their lap ages 2 years and older. No leaders (male and female) may have an elementary kid (kindergarten and older) in their laps at any time.

INCIDENT REPORTS

An incident report should be written for any injury leaving a mark, cut or bump (any that the kid did not arrive with). Incident reports should be signed by the ministry leader, classroom leader, and parent at the end of service.

Biting incidents and aggressive behavior (hitting and pushing) must be reported immediately to ministry staff. Incidents like these should also be reported to the parents of both kids, both the biter and the bitten/aggressor and the one who was hit. If any kid exhibits persistent biting or violent behavior, the CH Kids staff will notify the parents and work with them on future involvement.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

ALLERGIES

The Colonial Hills Kids Ministry Area is a nut-free facility. Parents are responsible for informing leaders of allergies pertaining to their kid at drop-off. Leaders are asked to be aware of kids with allergies in their classroom.

MEDICATION

Leaders are not allowed to administer any type of medication to any kid at any time.

SICK KIDS

If a kid begins to exhibit any signs of illness while in class, the leader should contact a Colonial Hills Kids Staff member to evaluate the kid.

STUDENTS SERVING WITH MINORS

Students may serve in CH Kids beginning in middle school in a supervised volunteer role. The CH Kids team may revoke the right for a student to serve at any time for any reason. All students must undergo a student screening process similar to the adult process, which requires an application, interview, training, parental permission, and reference checks. These additional guidelines apply to students:

- Students must follow the instruction and leadership of adult leaders at all times.
- There must be at least a 5 year age difference between the age of the student volunteer and the kids they are serving.
- Students must be 16 years of age or older to serve with kids 15 months to 2 years old. Unless specific permission is granted by the CH Kids Director, no one under the age of 18 is permitted to serve with kids 14 months and younger.
- Students may not bring unapproved friends to volunteer with them.

- Students do not count as adults when following the two-adult rule. (The two-adult rule states that a minimum of two trained, non-related, screened adults should supervise minors at all times.)
- Students are not permitted to use cell phones during CH Kids programming.
- Students need to be engaged and connected to the larger body at Colonial Hills. (involved in student ministry small groups, attending main service with their family, etc.)

LEADER CONDUCT

Leaders must stay alert and attentive to the kids at all times. Leaders should not eat meals, read personal materials, talk or text on their phones, work on their computer, or perform any other task that takes their attention away from caring for the kids in their room.

While some of the kids in our ministry have personal cell phones, CH Kids leaders are prohibited from giving out their phone number to children or texting/calling a child directly.

CH Kids requires that leaders refrain from posting pictures of kids from their classroom or small group on social media without the consent of parents and their ministry director.

In the event of a last-minute illness or emergency, leaders should contact their ministry leader to let them know.

CH STUDENTS ADDENDUM

Along with the preceding Colonial Hills Kids, Students, and Family Ministry policies, there are some specifics to address with CH Students.

MONITORING OF LEADERS

Student Ministry Staff will regularly observe the leaders' interactions with students. This includes Student Ministry Staff sitting in on small groups.

TRANSPORTATION

Leaders may occasionally be in a position to provide transportation for students. Leaders must have verbal permission from the student's parent or guardian before providing transportation. Leaders may only transport students of the same gender. Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a public place (Starbucks, Sonic, etc.) should be avoided. Leaders should avoid all physical contact with students in vehicles. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while transporting students. Drivers should obey all traffic laws and ensure everyone in the car is wearing a seatbelt.

SOCIAL MEDIA

All student ministry staff and leaders are to operate above reproach and in wisdom when it comes to social media. Make sure you think twice before posting as it will likely be seen by students, parents, and the larger church community.

Student ministry volunteers are never to follow or interact with students of the opposite gender on any social media apps and/or networking sites. Additionally, student ministry volunteers should never communicate with any student via direct messages.

COMMUNICATION

Leaders may not text, message, or direct message students of the opposite gender. Leaders should make all their communications with students within a group message or with another leader in the message as much as possible.

No communication with students (calls or texts) should be done after 7:30pm or during school hours.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the CH Kids and Students Safety Policies and Procedures Manual. I have read this manual in its entirety and understand the importance of the matters set forth within its pages. I agree to follow and abide by these policies, procedures, and guidelines during my serving at Colonial Hills Church. Additionally, I submit to the Colonial Hills leadership over CH Kids and CH Students as they enforce these policies and guidelines. Further, I understand that the manual may be modified in the future, and that any guidelines may need to be amended or revised. As changes are made public, I understand that it is my responsibility to review changes and adapt accordingly.

LEADERS NAME: (PRINT) _____

LEADERS SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____