



KIDS Ministry HandBook

**“Helping Children know God
and become Followers of Jesus”**

(757) 382-9500 | www.riveroakchurch.org

255 Great Bridge Blvd, Chesapeake, VA

Dear Children's Ministry Volunteer:

We have the privilege of working together to serve God and the kids and families of our community! We are thankful that you're willing to serve and use your gifts to make a difference for God. God has equipped you to serve in this ministry in a unique way. You are a valuable member of this team. As we work together for one purpose, let us always remember our goal: to point kids and families to God and serve with joyful hearts.

This handbook will give you details on policies, procedures, expectations, and safety information we currently have in place in our children's ministry. Please familiarize yourself with the information in this handbook, as it is especially important that we all enforce safety policies and procedures. It is our hope that your heart will be filled, and your life will be blessed as you serve.

Sue Hilton

Children's Ministry Director

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OUR TEAM

Weekday Preschool Director: Katie Tucker – katie.tucker@riveroakchurch.org

ClubHouse Director: Jennifer Steinwand – jennifer.steinwand@riveroakchurch.org

Acorn Alley Director: Gina McCartney - gina.mccartney@riveroakchurch.org

Special Needs Coordinator: Donna Boone - donna.boone@riveroakchurch.org

Childcare Coordinator: Amber Foy – amber.foy@riveroakchurch.org

Awana & Events Coordinator: Christin Fleming – christin.fleming@riveroakchurch.org

ROCKids Admin: Bonnie Kingsbery – bonnie.kingsbery@riveroakchurch.org

VISION STATEMENT

Helping children know God and become followers of Jesus.

VALUES

- Safe and secure environment
- Bible-centered teaching
- Exciting and fun programming
- Opportunities for children to grow as disciples of Jesus
- Empowering parents to be the spiritual leaders in their home

JOINING THE TEAM

To become a member of our volunteer team, these are the steps you will take. We prefer that you have attended River Oak Church for 3 months. All volunteers must be members of River Oak Church or in the process of becoming one.

Volunteers: A volunteer is at least 18 years old, has gone through our screening and training process, and can serve in any area of children's ministry.

Student Volunteer: A student volunteer is anyone who has completed 5th grade and has completed our screening and training process. A student volunteer may serve with children age preschool to 5th grade as a second volunteer.

Junior Volunteer: Kids in 3rd - 5th grade may serve in a ministry alongside their parent or guardian.

INTERVIEW

All children's ministry volunteers will have a one-on-one interview with a children's ministry leader. It's not a big deal; we just want to get to know you!

APPLICATION & BACKGROUND CHECK

All children's ministry volunteers will fill out an application and undergo a criminal background check (minors excluded). Background check will come in an email from the company Checkr.

Student volunteers under 18 will complete a Student Volunteer application that has to be signed by a parent. Student volunteers must have completed 5th grade.

HANDS-ON TRAINING

After the screening process, we will pair you with a seasoned children's ministry volunteer for on-the-job training in your interest area. You won't be thrown in alone! Let us know if you have any questions along the way.

EVALUATION

This is a time for you and for us to see if this role is the right fit for you, or if you want to try a different ministry role. We typically do 90-day follow-ups after a new volunteer starts, but if you want to try something different at any time before that, just let us know!

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

We're happy to have you as a member of the children's ministry team! You will also receive a volunteer shirt and lanyard that you can wear on Sundays when serving. You will also receive an invite to Planning Center our scheduling site.

VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

ATTENDANCE

Your attendance, punctuality, and involvement are crucial to the success of this ministry. The consistency of team members serving is very important for you as a volunteer as well as for the children you serve.

If you are scheduled to serve, please arrive no later than 30 minutes prior to your service time to check in and prepare to welcome kids. If you are unable to attend your scheduled service, please give your ministry leader advance notice. In the event of a last-minute emergency, please call or text your leader and let them know you are unable to fulfill your commitment.

ATTIRE AND IDENTIFICATION

All volunteers must wear an official volunteer lanyard while serving so everyone is aware of who our approved volunteers are and who is permitted in the children's ministry areas. If you forget your lanyard, let a staff member know and we will give you a volunteer one for the day. Keep in mind that in most of the children's ministry areas, you will sit on the floor to interact with children through learning and play. Please make sure your clothing is appropriate for the age-specific area in which you are serving.

INTERACTING WITH KIDS AND PARENTS

- When parents drop off their kids, they entrust us to protect and care for their kids. A smile and a positive greeting will help reassure parents that their kids are in good hands.
- Remember to always speak words of encouragement, kindness, and love, even in difficult situations or disciplinary situations.
- Honor and show love to children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, or culture.
- Chatting with other adults and cell phone use should be avoided while you are serving. Make sure the kids are your primary focus.
- Play with the kids, be silly, and laugh!
- Listen to the kids. Encourage them and speak God's words to them.

Remember to be positive and encouraging when parents return to pick up their kids. Let them know how much we love their kids!

SAFETY POLICIES

SECURITY

- All main entrance doors of the Children's Wing are always manned or closed and locked.
- Only those with volunteer or guardian stickers and/or staff/medical/safety lanyards can enter/exit.
- Visitors must be approved by a staff member before entering.

CLASSROOM SAFETY

- Always be engaged and aware while you have children in your care.
- Keep your eyes open during prayer.

- Never leave the children alone for any amount of time.
- Throw away any broken toys and report any broken equipment.
- In Acorn Alley, check that all outlets have covers and lower cabinets are locked.
- Volunteers are not allowed to leave the Children's Ministry wing with children.
- When in doubt, ask. Staff are always ready and willing to help in any way.

PHONE AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Volunteers should not be on their phones at all when serving and are not permitted to take any pictures or videos of the kids while serving. Volunteers are not permitted to be "friends" with or interact with kids on social media, text, or any other private means of communication outside of church. Volunteers are not to show kids anything on their personal cell phones or use their personal cell phones or tablets at all when serving. Phone use during class is for emergencies only.

NEVER BE ALONE WITH A CHILD

There must always be at least two volunteers in every room when the children are present. In general, Children are not to be accepted into any ministry area until this requirement is met. Volunteers should never be alone with kids in the restroom (see restroom procedures).

VOLUNTEER-TO-KID RATIOS

Children's ministry is dedicated to maintaining safe and relationally appropriate volunteer-to-child ratios to provide the most effective learning experience for children. The following are approved volunteer-to-kid ratio guidelines.

- Infants 1 adult for every 2–4 babies
- Toddlers 1 adult for every 6 toddlers
- Preschool 1 adult for every 10 kids
- Elementary 1 adult for every 12 kids

INDOOR PLAYGROUND GUIDELINES

- All children must wear socks – no shoes and no bare feet.
- The playground equipment is designed for children 6 years and younger.
- The playground is for class use only and closes at 12:15 on Sunday afternoon.
- The utmost vigilance is needed when your class is in the playground.

OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND GUIDELINES

- Double check that the outside gates are closed.
- Do not let anyone in through the outside gates, even parents.
- Children need to be back inside the classroom for pick up.
- Slightly prop open door from the indoor playground so you can get back in. Exterior doors are always locked.
- Be aware of your surroundings. If anything looks suspicious bring the children back inside and alert a staff member.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

During ministry hours, all classrooms with kids and volunteers must have a door with a see-through window, or the classroom door must always remain open. In Acorn Alley, the bottom of a split classroom door must be closed and locked.

INCIDENT REPORTS

For any instance in which a child gets hurt and needs an ice pack or more than a band aid while in the care of the children's ministry, an incident report must be filled out and signed by the children's ministry volunteer, a member of children's ministry staff, and the parent/guardian (after staff has discussed the incident with them). It is recommended to send a copy home with the parents and keep a copy in the children's ministry records.

CONTACTING PARENTS

If you need to get ahold of parents at any point during the service, let a staff member know and they will contact them. Parents will be contacted if a child exhibits symptoms of illness, is crying inconsolably for more than 10 minutes, or behaves in a violent manner.

RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING ABUSE

River Oak church maintains a zero tolerance against child abuse and neglect. All volunteers should immediately report any incident of abuse or neglect of which they have knowledge or which they have observed. If at any time you suspect a child may be being abused, speak to a River Oak staff member immediately. Leadership will then address the situation and have any interactions with the parents according to the policy laid out by River Oak Church.

It is our responsibility, both to God and parents, to provide a nurturing and safe environment. We have developed safety policies and procedures for all staff and volunteers.

- There will never be a volunteer alone with a child.
- Two or more volunteers must always be in a classroom.
- Children will never be left unsupervised.

Staff/Volunteer shall not in any way abuse any child, including:

- **Physical** – strike, spank, shake or slap.
- **Verbal** – humiliate, degrade, threaten, compare, criticize, curse at or yell.
- **Sexual** – inappropriate touch or verbal exchange.
- **Mental** – shaming, withholding love or cruelty.
- **Neglect** – withholding food, water, or basic needs, etc.
- **No** type of abuse or corporal punishment is tolerated and results in immediate dismissal.

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL TOUCH AND CARE

- Children over 2 should not be sitting on your lap or laying their heads on your lap or legs.
- When hugging elementary age children, a side hug is appropriate.
- Express concern or care with a hand on the shoulder or arm.
- Holding a child's hand and talking to them or praying with them is also appropriate.
- Never promise to keep a secret.
- If you are concerned about a child in any way, please tell a staff member.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Contact a staff member immediately if you see signs of abuse, such as:

- depression, sudden changes in behavior, paranoia, fear of their caregivers or others, aggressive behavior, anxiety, accidents in their underwear, imitating or talking about sexual behaviors, wounds or pain, unexplained bruises, untreated illnesses.

FOOD AND DRINK ALLERGIES

Due to the risk of allergies, we do not allow outside food in the classrooms (unless pre-approved), and we are a nut-free facility. Parents should let the child's leader, or a staff member know if their child has a medical need or allergy. We cannot administer any medications.

- A small snack is provided for children during class. If a child has an allergy there are alternative snacks available.
- Parents may provide a pre-approved outside snack in allergy situations.
- Check children's name tag stickers before serving snacks. If a child has an allergy, it will be printed on the bottom of their name tag.
- Babies under 1 should not be fed anything other than what parents have provided for them.
- Kids are allowed to bring water sippy cups or bottles into the room, but they must be labeled. If they are not labeled, you can label them with tape and a marker.
- Always wash your hands before and after serving snacks.
- Only serve what is provided in the classroom unless you have talked to a staff member beforehand.

CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT PROCEDURES

CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

- Parents will check in their kids at our check-in station. They will be issued a nametag sticker to be placed on the child and a corresponding sticker for the parent or guardian for pick-up.
- In addition to this check-in, kids must also be signed in at their classroom to create an accurate attendance roster.
- Greet each child as they come in and make sure they have a check-in sticker.
- Check that all belongings are labeled with the child's name.

CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

- Children will be released from their environments only to an adult or high school teen with the corresponding pick-up ticket.
- Prior to releasing the child verify that the pick-up number matches the child's check-in sticker, even if you know the family.
- There must be a minimum of one adult volunteer at each door ready to check nametags at dismissal and to assure that all children remain in the room during the check-out process.
- Nametags remain on each child even after the corresponding pick-up ticket has been received.
- If a parent needs to pick up their child during service, they must remain outside the classroom while a volunteer retrieves their child and brings them to the parent.

- Call the child by name, thank them for coming, and wish them a great week.
- Take this time to connect with parents briefly by expressing positive encouragement, a quick report on their child's experience, or just letting them know we look forward to seeing them next week.

MISSING PICK-UP TAGS

Do not release a child to a parent unless they have a matching sticker, even if it's a parent you know. This will communicate to everyone that we take safety seriously.

If a parent loses their sticker, they must see a staff member and show their ID; that person will look them up in our system to make sure they are authorized to pick up the child.

If there are any custody issues, we will notate them in our check-in system and will notify the child's leaders and security team.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline should always be done in a positive, patient, and grace-filled way that focuses on helping the kids instead of enforcing punishments. When discipline is necessary to keep a safe and effective environment for everyone, here are three steps to take:

1. Redirect

- **Get on the child's level** and look them in the eye. **Give a verbal warning**, explaining why the behavior is not acceptable. **Give a suggestion** for the right way to act or behave and help them do it.

2. Remove

- If the child does not obey when you give them a redirection, it may be necessary to remove them from the situation or activity so they can calm down and prepare to rejoin the service. Place them in an area away from the other kids for no more than one minute per year of age.

3. Refer

- If the child is still not obeying, refer the child to a staff member for assistance and removal from class.

***If a child physically hurts another child or volunteer, you should go straight to #3 Refer.**

Never attempt to physically discipline a child, belittle a child, or administer corporal punishment.

TIPS AND GUIDELINES

- Never place yourself or any child in a dangerous or uncomfortable situation.
- Always inform parents and your ministry leader whenever disciplinary actions are necessary.
- Be sure to approach the issue with genuine concern. Be concise, direct, and above all, caring.
- Volunteers may not spank their own children in front of others while serving.

- Remember that your encounter with these kids may be the only encouraging and positive moment in their week. Focus on the child, not the behavior.
- Be patient, give grace, and show love!
- Prepare ahead of time. Be familiar with the curriculum and have the supplies in place before the kids arrive.
- Establish rules and expectations early and communicate them often.
- Be proactive by ensuring that proper ratios are met to maintain order. Look for kids who need extra help and provide it before they disrupt the class.
- When talking to parents about discipline issues, always be positive and encouraging, and ask for ways you can help their child.
- Never offer unsolicited parenting/medical advice or medical diagnosis of any kind. If you have concerns, let a staff member know.

RESTROOM & DIAPER PROCEDURES

RESTROOM PROCEDURES

- Never take a child into the restroom alone.
 - Walk them to the restroom, and then wait outside the door while they go in.
 - Volunteers only aid a child using the restroom if the child is under 3 years old.
 - Helping with buttons, snaps or zippers is ok.
 - Volunteers are not permitted to help with wiping after a bowel movement for kids who are 3 and older.
 - If kids over 3 have an accident or need help wiping, a staff member will contact the parents.
 - If a child has an accident, please let a staff member know. We will care for the child so you can take care of the rest of your class.
 - Make sure a child washes their hands after going to the bathroom.
 - If a child makes a mess in the restroom, let a staff member know after the child is finished.
 - All ROC Kids hallway bathroom doors remain open. Adults do not enter the bathroom except in an emergency. They may stand in the hallway and direct children from there.
- Adults may not use the children's bathroom.**

DIAPER PROCEDURES

- Diapers must be changed on changing tables only.
- All babies/toddlers must have a diaper change at least once during the worship hour.
- Never leave a child unattended on the changing table or turn away from a child while they are on the table.
- Place wet or soiled diaper in a plastic bag and discard in trash can at changing area.
- If a child has a bowel movement, the diaper must be changed within five minutes.
- Use disposable liners under each child while changing them.
- Use clean gloves and liners for each diaper change.
- Wash your hands after each diaper change.
- Do not administer any creams or ointments. Only parents can administer.
- For rooms with a connected bathroom, the door must remain open while in use.

SICKNESS & CLEANLINESS POLICIES

WASHING HANDS

One of the best ways to prevent the passing of germs is by washing hands. It's important to teach children and model frequent handwashing. Remind the children continuously and help children wash their hands as needed.

Volunteers' hands should be washed before and after eating, before handling food/snacks, before and after changing diapers, after using the restroom or helping a child use the restroom, and after wiping and blowing noses.

ROOM CLEANING GUIDELINES

- All fabric toys, sheets and blankets should be thrown in a hamper to be washed.
- Use cleaning spray provided to clean toys, play mats, and any hard surface children encounter during/between services.
- Changing tables, countertops, and child tables must be cleaned with provided cleaning spray after each service.
- Stack chairs after last service
- If you have a bathroom in your room, make sure the toilet is flushed.
- Take trash to large bin in hallway.
- If you moved any furniture around, please return it to its original state.

ILLNESS

Kids who show any signs of illness are not allowed to be in any children's ministry environment. When addressing an ill child's health with parents, assure them that we want their child in children's ministry as soon as they are feeling better. If an illness is discovered after a child has been dropped off to a classroom, please keep the child at a safe distance from other children and tell a staff member. We will contact the parents for a pick-up.

Children who have experienced any of these symptoms within the past 24 hours will be asked to stay with their parents during service:

- Fever of 100° or greater (must be fever-free without medicine for 24 hours)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Any illness for which a doctor has prescribed antibiotics (must be on the antibiotics for 24 hours prior to returning to a classroom)
- Excessive runny nose or bad cough, especially if it kept them awake at night.
- Rash of unknown origin or any contagious rash
- Pink eye or eye discharge
- Lice

EMERGENCY POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The Children's staff have radios and so does each check in area. In any emergency notify a staff member who can alert our medical and safety team immediately. Safety will also let us know through the radio system if we need to initiate an evacuation/lockdown procedure.

In the event of any emergency, do not allow parents to pick up their kids until all procedures have been followed and kids are checked out using proper check-out procedures. This is to ensure the safety of all kids in the event of what might be a chaotic scenario. The children's ministry staff and safety volunteers are in place to keep everything calm and smooth and ensure that all procedures are followed. Parents can stand with their kids—but they cannot leave with their kids.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES AND INJURIES

- **Medical emergency:** Notify a staff member immediately if you have a medical emergency in your classroom/nursery. The staff member will call 911 and contact the medical team, Safety team, and parents. One volunteer will move the other children to another classroom or the indoor playground.
- **First Aid kits:** Kits containing gloves, band aids, and incident reports are in each classroom to use for minor injuries. If a child requires more than a band aid, please notify a staff member.
- **Epi-Pens:** Our children's safety is our utmost concern. If an Epi-Pen needs to be administered the volunteer will **immediately** notify a staff member.
- **Biting:** Please inform your coordinator immediately in the case of a biting incident. Comfort the hurt child and wash the area. Separate the child who bit. A staff member will contact both children's parents. A parent must remain with the child that bit if they remain in the classroom.
- For ANY incident, other than a minor first aid need, an incident report, available in the classrooms, is filled out with details and given to a staff member who will copy and send home with the child. For all injuries and incidences, please notify a staff member.
- Volunteers never dispense medication even with parent permission.

INTRUDER

No adults are allowed in the children's ministry area unless accompanying children or volunteering in the children's ministry. Unknown persons in the children's ministry area will be asked to leave immediately. Approved adults will be wearing River Oak lanyards.

- Lock classroom doors from the inside, and do not allow any children out into the unsecured part of the building.
- Check your roster and do a head count to make sure all kids are present.
- Wait for all clear from a staff member or safety team.

MISSING CHILD

If a child is missing, immediately alert your ministry leader and safety team and give them a description of the child. The church will go on lockdown. Parents will be alerted, and outside doors will be locked. Keep all the other kids calm, and do not allow parents to pick up kids or leave the building while the children's ministry and security team does a sweep of the rooms and parking lot

area. The parents should stay at the Check-In Desk, and the child should be brought to the Check-In Desk when found.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

If there is an active shooter that enters the children's wing

- Proceed to a room with a door, close all the windows and doors, and turn off all the lights. Close top of Dutch door and lock. Cover door window with black curtain above window. If possible, get everyone down on the floor and ensure that no one is visible from outside the room. One person in the room should call 911, advise the dispatcher of what is taking place, and inform him/her of your location; remain in place until the police, or the safety team gives the "all clear".
- If an active shooter enters your classroom, try to remain calm. Listen and obey all commands by the shooter. DO NOT TRY TO STOP NOR INTERFERE THE SHOOTER. Dial 911, if possible, and alert police to the shooter's location; if you can't speak, leave the line open so the dispatcher can listen to what's taking place. Normally the location of a 911 call can be determined without speaking. If there is absolutely no opportunity for escape or hiding, it might be possible to negotiate with the shooter; attempting to overpower the shooter with force should be considered as a very last resort, after all other options have been exhausted. If the shooter leaves the area, proceed immediately to a safer place and do not touch anything that was near the shooter.
- No matter what the circumstances, if you decide to flee during an active shooting situation, make sure you have an escape route and plan in mind. Do not attempt to carry anything while fleeing; move quickly and quietly, keep your hands visible, and follow the instructions of any police officers you may encounter. Do not attempt to remove injured people; instead, leave wounded victims where they are and notify authorities of their location as soon as possible. Do not try to drive off the church grounds until advised it is safe to do so by the police.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

The evacuation procedure should be used for a fire alarm, a bomb threat, and any other times deemed necessary by the safety team.

- Children's Wing doors will remain closed and locked.
- Count all the children and grab the attendance sheet.
- Babies, Crawlers, and Ones place as many children in rolling cribs and evacuate through the outside door in their room.
- The 2-year-olds and Buddies will exit out their door to the left and evacuate through Room #101.
- The 3-year-olds will exit out their doors to the right and stay along the right-hand side of hallway and evacuate through Room # 102.
- PreK will exit out their doors straight through the Indoor Playground. Once outside they will exit to the left of the outdoor playground.
- Elementary children will line up and exit down the back stairwell. There will be a line on each side of the stairwell for quicker exit. At the bottom, you will exit the building and immediately turn right and through the gate.
- An adult volunteer is the last to leave the classroom.

- Acorn Alley will make their way to the parking lot that is closest to Great Bridge Blvd. Please check the map on the last page.
- ClubHouse will huddle up outside the playground in the parking lot area. Please check the map on the lastpage.
- Once at your destination, account for your children. If you are missing any, please report to a staff member right away.
- Parents can pick up their children with their guardian ID stickers once you have accounted for everyone in your class.

SEVERE WEATHER

All classrooms with windows evacuate to interior rooms. Elementary to the large grouproom and Nursery rooms to a preschool room.

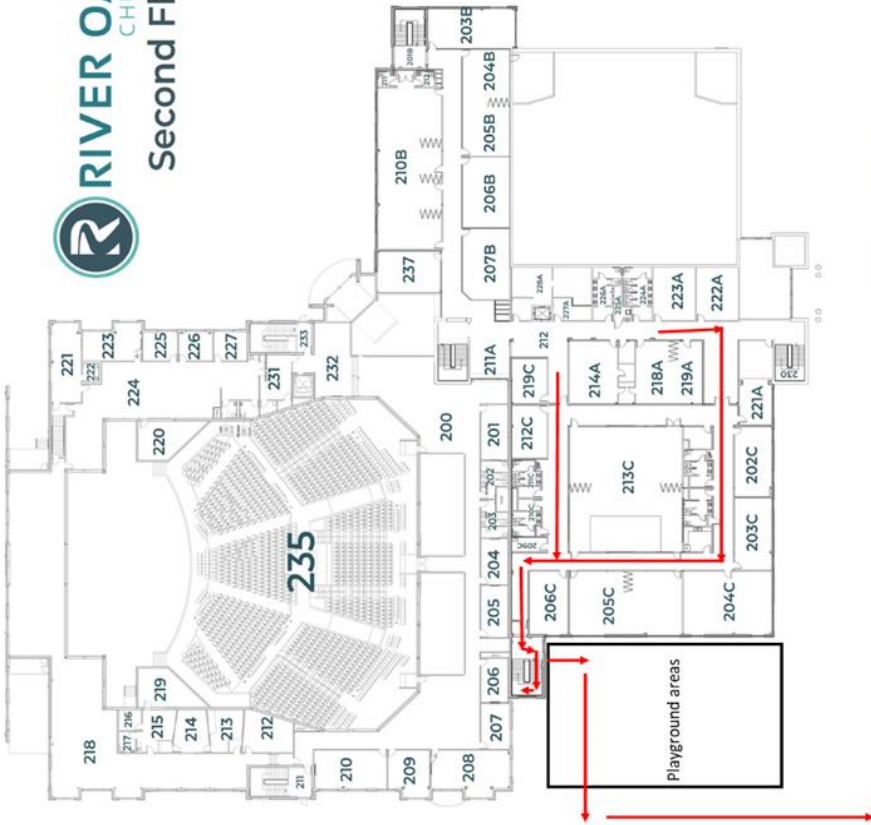
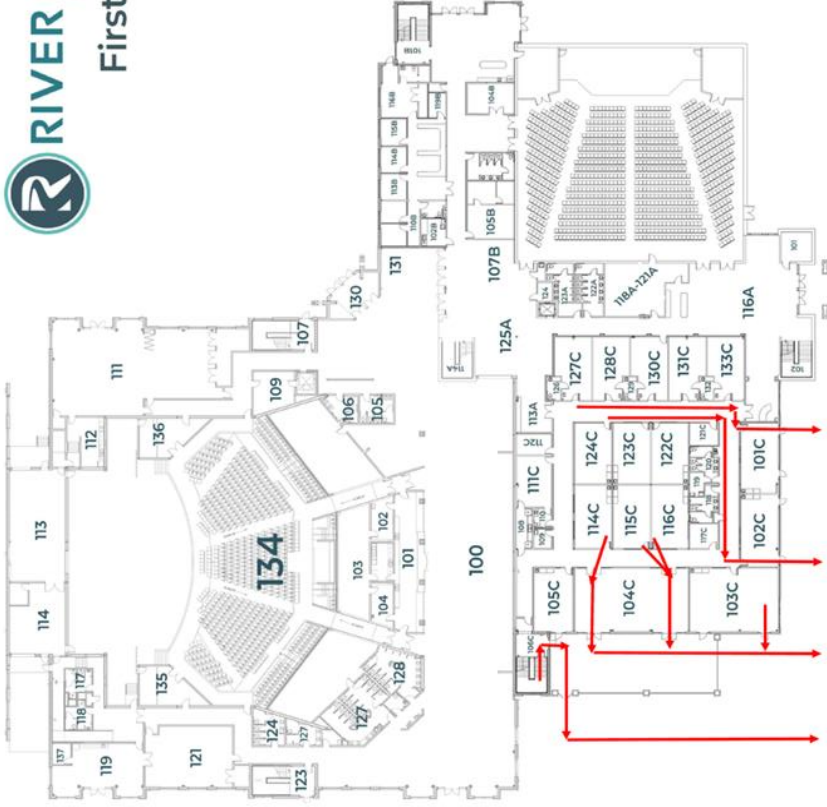
KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

We welcome all kids to participate in our ministry. If a child has special needs, we will work together with the child's parents to come up with a plan to support the child and provide the best care we are able to provide for the child and family.

Parents must fill out the "Inclusive Children's Ministry: Special Needs Form" to give us information that will help us minister to their children. The children's ministry leader will discuss a care plan with the parents—customized to each child's needs to provide care, safety, and ministry to the child and family.

If possible, we will provide a one-on-one buddy for kids who need one-on-one support. We aim to include all kids in our kids' worship services safely if they are able.

We are not able to provide medical support or care to kids.





RIVER OAK CHURCH

Code of Conduct

- **Love Jesus**—Must have a personal relationship with Jesus and a growing faith.
- **Love kids**—Love and care for the kids in the ministry. Show kindness, grace, and joy while serving.
- **Be committed**—Must show up on time when you're scheduled to serve. Must be prepared and familiar with the curriculum. Must commit to one year of volunteering and attend volunteer training meetings held twice a year.
- **Follow the policies**—Must always follow all policies and procedures.
- **Point kids to God**—In everything you do and say, including discipline or difficult situations, show kids God's love. Use every opportunity you get to talk to them about His love.
- **Communicate with your leader**—If anything happens in the children's ministry environment that your leader needs to know about, let them know immediately.
- **Attend adult worship services**—Be a committed part of the church family. You must respect the core beliefs and values of our church and ministry.
- **Live like Jesus**—This doesn't mean you have to be perfect and never make mistakes, but you must aim to live a holy life like Jesus, avoiding intentional sin. Your life in the areas of treatment of others (including on social media), drug/alcohol use, and sexual behavior should reflect becoming more like Jesus.

I agree with River Oak's statement of faith and to live out this Code of Conduct. I will carry out the children's ministry policies and procedures to the best of my ability.

Name: _____

Read Statement of Faith

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Sign and return this to your children's ministry leader.