

GRAND AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
GABC Preschool/Nursery Volunteer Handbook

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS.....3

GABC PRESCHOOL/NURSERY MINISTRY COMMITTEE4

GABC PRESCHOOL/NURSERY MINISTRY GOALS5

SECTION I – VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES6

 Volunteer Application Process

 Volunteer Age Requirements

 Training

 Roles

 Scheduling

 Finding A Sub

SECTION II – WHAT TO EXPECT ON SUNDAYS8

 Family Check-In

 Curriculum

SECTION III – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES10

 Building Security

 Worker-to-Child Ratios

 Child Safety

 Health

 Restroom & Diapering Procedures

 Discipline

 Abuse Prevention

 Emergencies

STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT17

LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS

Thank you for serving in the GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry! We are excited for you to join us in pointing our kids to the heart of our Savior Jesus Christ. Our goal is that GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry would be a place that is Christ-exalting, child-engaging, creative and really fun!

At GABC, we believe children are valuable gifts from God. God calls his church both to train children and to protect them from harm. We believe children, just like adults, need Jesus' saving love. It is our goal to teach the gospel of Jesus and the truth of the Bible in a way that is age-appropriate and fun. Additionally, the safety of the children is of utmost importance to us. We believe the policies and procedures contained in this handbook will help keep our children safe while we proclaim the good news of the gospel to them.

We also believe the home is the front line of ministry to children. Since the responsibility for a child's spiritual formation rests primarily in the hands of his or her parents, we want to walk beside parents as they train their children to believe in and follow Jesus—providing the best help and resources we can. We seek to do this through our curriculum, the way we pray for our kids and families, and how we train our volunteers.

This handbook is for any volunteer interested in, or already involved in the GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry. Please take some time to carefully read each section as it describes in detail the inner workings of this ministry.

Your role as a volunteer is a crucial part of this ministry and the lives of our kids. We are so thankful for the way you are allowing the Lord to use you here at GABC. Thank you for your ownership of this exciting ministry!

GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry Committee

GABC'S PRESCHOOL/NURSERY COMMITTEE

Stacy Felkins
Committee Member & Ministry Coordinator

Angela Seever
Committee Member & Preschool Parent

JoEllen Vardeman
Committee Member & Preschool Foundations Teacher

Steve Vardeman
Committee Member & Preschool Foundations Teacher

GABC PRESCHOOL/NURSERY MINISTRY GOALS

We strive to make the GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry a place that is Christ-exalting, child engaging, creative and fun!

Christ-Exalting: Whether it's praying for and singing with our babies, teaching our toddlers big truths about God, or teaching our oldest kids how to see Christ through the entire Bible, we are passionate about teaching our kids about Jesus. We also work hard to make the environment Christ-exalting by the ways we relate to one another. We want to model encouragement and quick repentance as we serve.

Child-Engaging: We believe children are a blessing, and we don't want to miss out on the precious time we have with them. GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry is more than a place where children just hang out with adult supervision. Our volunteers are encouraged to get on a child's level, interact with and build relationships with them. Our classrooms and lessons are designed for children at their specific developmental levels.

Creative: Each volunteer and child is created and gifted differently. We want to empower our volunteers to use their diverse gifts as they serve a diverse group of children. We love having teachers with a variety of teaching styles and activities reach all the children in our care.

Fun: Children learn through having fun, and we want them to joyfully learn about Jesus. We hope that children are excited to come and eager to tell their parents about their time in the GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry on the way home, and we are committed to work hard to make this happen!

SECTION I

Volunteer Roles & Responsibilities

VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

APPLICATION & SCREENING PROCESS

All volunteers are required to complete the application and screening process prior to serving in the GABC nursery/preschool ministry. This includes completing the volunteer application, providing references, and signing off on the Code of Ethics (Found on the application).

In addition, GABC requires all staff members and volunteers working with the children or students to undergo a criminal background check prior to serving. Background checks will be renewed every three years.

VOLUNTEER AGE REQUIREMENTS

Volunteers must at least be 12 years old to serve as classroom helpers. Younger children will be allowed to serve only if the parent or guardian of the child is serving alongside them.

TRAINING

Each fall we will hold mandatory training for our volunteers. This gives us a chance to celebrate what God is doing in the GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry, to be reminded of the policies that keep children and volunteers safe, and to be trained on what we are changing to improve what is going on in this ministry.

ROLES

Ministry Coordinator

Ministry Coordinators are GABC members that are assigned to each service on Sundays to provide oversight for all volunteers. You can contact your ministry coordinator through the week with any questions or scheduling changes. On Sundays, you will find them in the Preschool/Nursery common area to help volunteers and parents.

Lead Teacher

Each classroom has a volunteer GABC member that serves as the Lead Teacher, providing oversight in the classroom on Sundays. This includes welcoming children at the door, leading the classroom through the service schedule, leading weekly lessons and activities, and ensuring policies and procedures are followed.

Classroom Helper

Classroom helpers are volunteers assigned to each classroom to assist Lead Teachers by responding to the needs of children through the service. This includes attending to physical, emotional, and relational needs of children and assisting with snack time and diapering/restroom breaks, ensuring all policies are followed.

SERVING ROTATION AND SCHEDULING

Classroom helpers will be scheduled to serve approximately once a month based on their availability. Lead Teachers will serve every week. We ask volunteers to commit to serving for one year and to give us as much advanced notice as possible if you need to step away from serving. You will be notified by email in the days before your scheduled Sunday to serve.

FINDING A SUBSTITUTE

If you are unable to serve on a date you have scheduled, you are responsible for finding a replacement. Please notify your Ministry coordinator of any scheduled changes or substitutions as soon as possible.

SECTION II

What to Expect on Sundays

WHAT TO EXPECT ON SUNDAYS

VOLUNTEER CHECK-IN

All volunteers should be in their classrooms 15 minutes prior to the service start time. The ministry coordinator on call will let you know of any changes that have occurred to the classroom assignments.

FAMILY CHECK-IN

All children must be checked in by a parent/guardian at the preschool/nursery check in desk prior to entering the area. Each child will receive a tag that includes their name, room assignment, allergy information, and a security code for parent/guardian pick-up. This code will also be used to inform the parent/guardian of any issues occurring during the service. The codes will be displayed on the projector screen in the service signaling the parent/guardian they are needed in the preschool/nursery area.

Parents and children should be greeted enthusiastically at the desk by the ministry coordinator and the children should be welcomed into the classroom by the volunteers assigned to the classroom that day. Any bags, cups, snacks etc. the child brings should be placed in a cubby.

If a child is nervous or sad about being dropped off, assure the parents that everything will be great. A confident volunteer at the door will help to reassure the parent and will usually help calm the child.

CHECK OUT PROCEDURE

The ministry coordinator should be stationed at the desk as parents pick up their children.

The parent pick-up tag **MUST** be checked against the child's tag before a child is released. No child will be released without a matching parent tag. If the parent tag is misplaced, the parent/guardian should present a photo ID and check against the Family name in the computer.

Classrooms will be cleaned and organized by volunteers prior to leaving. All tasted toys should be disinfected and the Ministry Coordinator should be notified of any broken toys, emptied supplies, or needed batteries.

ROOM ASSIGNMENTS

Children are assigned to rooms based on development or age. These are the general guidelines for classroom assignments:

Baby Room – Infant to walking well

Toddler Room – Walking well to 3rd birthday

Preschool Room – 3 years old to 5 years old

Again, these are guidelines. If a parent does not feel their child has matured enough physically or emotionally to promote, they should talk to a Ministry Coordinator about their concerns.

CURRICULUM

We strive to provide gospel-centered age-appropriate curriculum for each classroom.

Baby Room-The baby room uses a prayer guide that includes prayers for each week of the month. Volunteers pray these prayers together before the children arrive and with the children during the service.

Toddler Room-The toddler room uses an age-appropriate version of the preschool curriculum.

Preschool Room-Information about the current curriculum being used can be found at the preschool/nursery desk.

SECTION III

Policies and Procedures

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

BUILDING SECURITY

Only scheduled staff members, volunteers, children with name tags, parents with parent pick-up tags and nursing mothers will be allowed in the Preschool/Nursery area.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Preschool/Nursery area during children’s ministry programming or classes. Staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with any number of children in any room or building. A minimum of two background –checked adults must be present with any number of children at all times. If a parent is dropping off a child and only one background-checked volunteers is present, the volunteer should ask the parent to stay until a second background –checked volunteer arrives (Note: This could mean there are multiple parents waiting with their children.)

After every programming event, Preschool/Nursery staff members and volunteers must check every room and restroom in the area to insure all children and volunteers are out of the area prior to leaving.

WORKER--TO--CHILD RATIOS

GABC is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Preschool/Nursery programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Infants & Babies	2	8
Toddlers	2	10
Preschool	2	14

*The above ratios are minimum recommendations. Where supervision is concerned, more is generally better.

If a classroom is out of ratio it is important to immediately notify the Ministry Coordinator. Ministry Coordinators will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker-to-children ratios into compliance with church policy.

CHILD SAFETY

Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians may not stay in the classroom after dropping off their child unless only one volunteer is currently in the room. If a parent desires to participate in any classrooms (including their own child's) they will be required to complete the volunteer application and screening process.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under any influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while working with or supervising children at GABC.

Tobacco Use

GABC requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use of or possession of tobacco products in church facilities while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Preschool/Nursery activities or programs.

Cell Phones and Photos

Cell phone use is not permitted in the Preschool/Nursery classrooms by staff members or volunteers. All phones should be stored with other personal belonging while you are in a classroom. In the case of any emergency, you may excuse yourself from a classroom to use your phone, as long as you are not leaving a volunteer alone with children. It is never appropriate for a volunteer or member to allow a child to view or use their phone,

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from photographing children while serving in the GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry.

Attire

GABC Preschool/Nursery staff and volunteers should be dressed in modest attire when serving. When choosing your attire, be mindful of necklines and length of shorts/skirts. Keep in mind that you will likely be sitting on the floor and leaning over with children as you serve.

Sexually Oriented Conversations and Materials

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from initiating any sexually oriented conversations with children, and 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.

Staff members and volunteers at GABC are also prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. GABC staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their goal of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

Physical Contact

The following physical contact guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the GABC Preschool/Nursery programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Touching and/or displays of affection that are of sexual or violent nature are inappropriate and therefore forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection or the suspicion of any of the above should be immediately reported to the ministry coordinator or a church elder.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child and never be based on the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other staff members or volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of impropriety. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in GABC Preschool/Nursery Ministry must foster trust of both children and parents at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by other children or adults.
8. No children three years of age or older may sit on the lap of a volunteer or staff member.

Transportation

In the unlikely event that a staff member or volunteer would need to provide transportation for children, the following guidelines should be strictly observed:

1. Staff member and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one adult with the child in transport.
2. Children and adults in the car must be buckled (in a car seat/booster if necessary) according to the law.
3. Children should be transported directly to their destination with no stops along the way.
4. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
5. No cell phones may be used or looked at by the driver while driving.

HEALTH

Snacks

Children in the toddler and preschool rooms will be offered a snack. Parents whose children have an allergy will be asked to place an “Allergy Alert” sticker on their child's back at check in. Volunteers are responsible to check for these stickers before serving the snack. If a child is allergic to the snack, volunteers should ask the Ministry Coordinator for an alternative snack.

When feeding babies, volunteers must pay careful attention to follow all instructions given by the parents.

Medication

Medication may not be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer. The only exception to this policy is diaper ointment/medication, which should only be applied with permission given by the parent.

Preventing Sickness

We want to do all we can to prevent the spread of germs in the preschool/nursery area. We request that parents do not drop off children if they have the following symptoms:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher in the last 24 hours
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe Coughing
- Colored nasal drainage
- Pink eye
- Head lice
- Undiagnosed rash
- Open skin lesions
- Any communicable disease

In addition, we ask that volunteers offer children (toddlers and older) hand sanitizer before entering the room and before snack time, require all children to wash hands after using the restroom, and clean all toys after the service-paying special attention to any toys that children have put in their mouths.

We require volunteers to refrain from serving when sick with a contagious illness. If a volunteer is sick on the day they are scheduled to serve, they must follow the procedure to find a sub.

BATHROOM AND DIAPERING PROCEDURES

Diapering

1. No child should ever be forced to use the toilet.
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. 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 white board.
6. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
7. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and complete the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the preschool/nursery areas if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

Preschool Children

Preschool children will be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance by at least two volunteers when needed. At least one of these volunteers must be a female.

Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.

If using a public restroom, a volunteer must insure no adults are using the restroom before sending children into the restroom. If there are adults using the restroom, the children need to wait until the restroom is empty. The door should be propped open by a volunteer when more than one child is in the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on or assist a child, she should seek out another female worker to accompany her. If another worker is not available to accompany, she should ask the Ministry Coordinator to accompany her. Staff members or volunteers should never be in restroom alone with a child. Any assistance with straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Special Needs Children

For children with special needs, parents should be encouraged to speak with a Ministry Coordinator to make arrangements for appropriate diapering or bathroom visits.

Volunteers

Volunteers should never use the restroom in the presence of children. If a volunteer needs to use the restroom during their shift they should temporarily excuse themselves from their role (ensuring there are still at least two background-checked adults supervising children). Volunteers should wash hands before returning to the classroom.

DISCIPLINE

It is GABC's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavior management of children. No form of shaming or physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined by using redirection, time-outs, and other nonphysical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

1. Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some gentle physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
2. If the behavior does not change, remove the child from the group by directing them to a different area of the room (avoid being alone with the child).
3. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time out.
4. Provide the child with a chair to sit in or "spot" to sit (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until the time out is complete.
5. Follow the rule of thumb that time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (three years old, three minutes).
6. Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly—just two more minutes.")
7. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.
8. Our goals, with any discipline, are to redeem the relationship between the child and God and the child and volunteer involved.
9. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the Ministry Coordinator.

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Please review GABC's separate document on sexual abuse.

EMERGENCIES

This section is still under construction. Each classroom will eventually have an evacuation procedure posted for Fire and Tornadoes/Severe Weather Alerts.

Intruder

In the case that a dangerous intruder enters the building, classroom volunteers will be notified. Stay calm, ensure all of the children are in the classroom, and communicate only necessary details to the children. Quickly close the classroom door and barricade if possible. Instruct everyone to remain as quiet as they can and crouch down in scattered places that are out of the line of sight of doors and windows. Do not release children to any adult, even those with a matching parent tag, until the Ministry Coordinator has cleared child pick up.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURE STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of the GABC PRESCHOOL/NURSERY HANDBOOK and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at the GABC Preschool/Nursery.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised or eliminated by Grand Avenue Baptist Church and that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

Volunteer's Name (Please print)

Volunteer's Signature

Date