



# Parent Handbook

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## **Parents:**

We sincerely thank you for entrusting your children to us, your Sojourn Kids team, each and every Sunday. We value Sojourn's children and want to provide a safe and nurturing environment for them to actively learn about the God who loves them. We have established this handbook, including our policies and procedures, to protect not only our children, but also our team members and Sojourn's mission. You can rest assured that these rules will be strictly enforced. If you have any questions or concerns not addressed within this manual, feel free to email me.

Grace and peace,

**Michelle Craig**

**Director of Sojourn Kids**

[michelle@sojournheights.or](mailto:michelle@sojournheights.or)

## OUR MISSION

Sojourn Kids exists to help parents raise kids who love and trust Jesus, and we do this by providing a space for 4-month-olds through the end of third grade that is: SAFE, CHRIST-CENTERED, and FUN!

## OUR VISION

We want to see kids come to know Jesus and join the Father, Son, and Spirit in the historic work of redemption early and faithfully for the rest of their lives.

## OUR HOPE

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” -Jesus (Matthew 19:14)

At Sojourn, we believe children bring joy to the church family and help adults understand the love of the Father and the meaning of childlike faith. *Sojourn Kids is passionate about partnering with families to raise kids who love and trust Jesus.* Our dedicated team ensures that children are cared for and taught simple, biblical truth in a safe, loving environment.

## THE DIRECTOR of SOJOURN KIDS

Michelle Craig has been a member of Sojourn Heights Church since August 2015 and served in Sojourn Kids since November 2015. She became the Sojourn Kids Director in October 2022. Previously, Michelle taught 2nd grade and Kindergarten for five years. She is passionate about children's growth, development and life experiences. Becoming a mother to her two boys has taught her even more about the importance of sharing Christ's redeeming work with children. It is her desire to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with every Sojourn child and walk alongside every family to teach and disciple the coming generations.

## HOW TO SERVE

We are a fast growing ministry. If you have a heart to serve with children, please visit: [www.sojournheights.org/volunteer](http://www.sojournheights.org/volunteer) or email the Kids Director at [michelle@sojournheights.org](mailto:michelle@sojournheights.org). We have opportunities available in the following areas:

- Baby Room (4-16 months)
- Toddler Rooms (17-48 months)
- PreK+ Room (4-5 years old)
- Lower Elementary (1st-3rd grade)
- Upper Elementary (4th-6th grade) \*coming soon....

## SAFETY and SECURITY Policies

### CHECK-IN & SAFETY

In order to provide the safest environment for your children, we follow a strict check-in and checkout process with matching parent and child stickers. In addition, a Security Usher is always present and keeping watch in the Sojourn Kids building. See CHECK-IN & PICK-UP for more info.

### ALLERGIES & SPECIAL NEEDS

Please notify us of ANY and ALL allergies, medical or behavioral special needs so we can best help your children. For your convenience, we provide Cheerios and Pretzels as snacks for children in all Preschool rooms (Baby-PreK+).

### BACKGROUND SCREENING & TRAINING

All Sojourn Kids team members are background-checked and trained before serving.

### WELLNESS POLICY

We look forward to seeing team members and kids when feeling well, not exhibiting the following:

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Excessive/colored nasal drainage
- Persistent coughing
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Any infection of the eye/nose/throat
- Open sores
- Lice

If a child develops any of these symptoms while in class, parents will be contacted via text message or in person to pick up your child. Our desire is to protect all children and team members from exposure to illness and harm. We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining a healthy Sojourn Kids environment.

### RESTROOM / DIAPER-CHANGING POLICY

Only **adult female team members** may change diapers or assist children in the restroom. Team members shall always be within an arm's reach while a child is on the changing table. As a courtesy to parents, all diapers shall be checked and changed, if necessary, before children are checked out. Please send your child with a bag including a clean diaper, wipes, and a changing pad (if possible).

Parents are encouraged to take your potty-trained children to the restroom prior to checking them into their classrooms. When taking children to the restroom, we give them as much privacy as possible. The door must be left ajar if they require supervision. **No man or teenager may assist a child in the restroom. Only when the man is the child's father may they assist the child.** Children may not be asked to help other children in the restroom. Female caregivers may enter the restroom stall **ONLY** when absolutely necessary to assist a child, leaving the door open.

## POLICY AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Sojourn Kids maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy against child abuse and neglect, including physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment. It is against the law and against Sojourn Kids' policy for any team member or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

## NURSING MOTHERS

If you would like to nurse your child during the gathering, please feel free to use the glider chairs in the Baby Room. We ask that you utilize the Nursing Mothers sign in sheet located in the Baby Room.

## EMERGENCY CODE SYSTEM

CODE WHITE: MEDICAL EMERGENCY

CODE BLUE: WEATHER EMERGENCY

CODE RED: FIRE

CODE GREEN: MISSING CHILD/OUT OF CONTROL

CODE BLACK: STRANGER/WEAPON/UNAUTHORIZED PRESENCE

## EVACUATION PLAN

Lead through the exit door at the North end of the Sojourn Kids hallway (Aurora Street). If this door is blocked, lead the children through the sanctuary and out the front entrance (Gostic Street). Windows may also be used as an escape if necessary. The team members and children will congregate in the corner of the family parking lot at the crossing of Aurora and Gostic Streets. They will form a group circle in order to be counted and report to the Kids Director. We still ask that parents notify the teachers when they are removing their child from the class circle outside so that we can make sure all kids are accounted for.

## OUR CLASSROOMS: General Schedules

### Baby Room

1. Welcome & Free Play
2. Song Time
3. Snack & Bible Story
4. Check Out

### Toddler Rooms (2&3)

1. Welcome & Free Play
2. Song Time
3. Snack & Bible Story
4. Craft
5. Check Out

### PreK+ Room

1. Welcome & Free Play
2. Song Time
3. Snack & Bible Lesson
4. Craft
5. Check Out

### Elementary Rooms

1. Welcome & Activity
2. Bible Lesson
3. Bible Skills & Discussion
4. Dismissal

#### **Baby Room: 4-16 months**

Classroom caregivers pray over the babies and sing songs with them while they nurture the kids in their care. We have lesson content from *The Gospel Project for Kids* posted on the wall and tips for how to teach aspects of the lesson the older kids are learning in fun and appropriate ways for babies. Only females serve in this room.

#### **Toddler Rooms: 17-47 months (Rm 2&3)**

Teachers and support volunteers play, teach and sing with kids, while praying for them and pointing them to Jesus. In this classroom, *The Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum is taught through short Bible stories and activities that align with that day's story.

**PreK+ (4 years-kindergarten):** Teachers and support volunteers play, worship and teach God's word to our children in this classroom. Currently, we use *The Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum which teaches children that the Bible is one grand story!

**Lower Elementary (1st-3rd grade):** Our Sojourn Kids Elementary children meet every Sunday morning at 9am-10am in the children's building. They are instructed from *The Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum, which declares the Bible as one unified story of God's redemption through Jesus. They also get an opportunity to learn scripture, discuss scripture with their peers and have fun!

***What comes after 3rd grade?*** Because we believe children benefit greatly from seeing their parents engage with God and His people, we encourage parents to bring children in 4th grade and beyond to join us in the sanctuary. Sojourn is a family of families, and we don't expect perfectly behaved children! If your child is being disruptive, please don't be embarrassed. The sound of children is the sound of life and the future!

## ITEMS TO BRING

- Please label all of your child's belongings (Cups, bottles, pacifiers, etc.).
- Please provide extra diapers, wipes, pull-ups, change of clothes, etc.
- Please leave all toys and dolls at home so they don't get left behind.

## CLASSROOM RATIOS & PROMOTIONS

Sojourn Kids provides classrooms for the age groups noted in the chart below. We ask you to promote your children at the designated ages, knowing that certain children may developmentally need more time in a given class. For school-aged children, Promotion Sunday will occur the last Sunday in June, meaning following graduation from kindergarten, kids will be promoted into the Lower Elementary class, not at age 6, but the last Sunday in June before they enter 1st grade. At this time, our rising 4th graders will graduate into the sanctuary. We also invite you to bring your kids into our Sunday Gatherings as early as you see fit for your children.

### Room Promotional Marker Adult:Child Ratio

4-16 months / Infants, crawlers, new walkers
17-23 months / Proficient walkers
24-47 months/Proficient walkers and talkers
4-5 years old
6-9 years old

Babies 1:3    Toddlers 1:4/1:6    PreK + 1:8    Lower Elementary 1st - 3rd grade 1:10

Because we want to provide the best possible care for children, we closely monitor the adult-child ratio in each room. If the classroom reaches max capacity, we'll begin an overflow list. We'll try our best to make room for your child, so we'll write your name on the overflow list and notify you via text if we're able to accommodate your child.

## CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT

### BABIES, TODDLERS & PREK+(check-in) 9:45am

A team member will greet you at the Sojourn Kids check-in counter and walk you through our safe and easy registration process. The initial registration will take about 5 minutes, but upon future visits, the check-in process takes seconds using your phone number or child's name. Once your check-in stickers have been printed, you will be directed down the right side corridor and into the classroom hallways to drop your child(ren) at their classroom door. Even if you've designated a food allergy on your child's sticker, please re communicate this information to your child's teacher.

### LOWER ELEMENTARY (check-in) 9am

A team member will greet you at the Sojourn Kids check-in counter and walk you through our safe and easy registration process. The initial registration will take about 5 minutes, but upon future visits, the check-in process will take seconds using your phone number or child's name. Once your check-in stickers have been printed, you and your child(ren) can walk to the Lower Elementary classroom.

### BABIES, TODDLERS & PREK+ (check-out)

Upon arriving at the Check In desk, you will scan your child's security code on the ipad. The system will automatically check your child out. Please keep your security sticker because you will show your security sticker to the teacher at the classroom door and hold on to it if you have multiple children to pick up. The last child you pick up will be the teacher you give your sticker to. For the safety of your children, we WILL NOT release a child without their date-specific security sticker. If you need a new sticker, please talk to the Security Usher or Gathering Coordinator.

### LOWER ELEMENTARY (check-out)

At 9:55am, your child's teacher will meet you (parent) in the courtyard and check your child's security sticker to match numbers. After this, you are dismissed with your child to attend the Gathering.



## DISCIPLINE POLICY

We discipline to disciple and this establishes expectations and consistency.

1. Remind misbehaving child of classroom expectations in a **playful tone**. (Wait, show me your listening ears please.) Use a firmer tone if that doesn't work.
2. Redirect attention to a different object or activity, away from whatever is causing issues.
3. Give kids choices. (Would you like to sit on the floor or in my lap? ... You can use a crayon or a pencil - which would you like? Etc.)

### For incidents involving harm to others:

We love our kids and families, and because we do, we will lovingly intervene **immediately** when kids hurt their friends in moments of anger or frustration. Harming others includes, but isn't limited to: biting, pinching, kicking, hitting, and pushing. Never assume something happened; you (or another adult) **must SEE** it.

1. If a child exhibits a behavior with the intent to harm someone else: **1st Consequence**
  - IMMEDIATELY remove the child from the situation, and stay with them near the door until their parent arrives.
  - Contact parents IMMEDIATELY to come have a 2-minute chat with their child.
  - Complete an Incident Report. **Never use another child's name when relaying the info.** Our goal in being vague/discrete is to show grace to the child and parent(s) because we love them, and Jesus extends the same grace to all.
  - Show parents the incident report & ask them to sign.
2. If the child inflicts harm on a friend again (same day or different day): **2nd Consequence**
  - he/she must leave class for the day. Tick the box on the same incident report for 2nd consequence. Complete an additional Incident Report for the child who was hurt.
  - If the child that's been hurt is still inconsolable after 10 minutes, contact parents.
  - Regardless, show the parents of the child who was harmed by an Incident Report & have them sign it. **Never use another child's name when relaying the info.** Our goal in being vague/discrete is to show grace to the child and parent(s) because we love them, and Jesus extends the same grace to all.
3. If the child inflicts harm on a friend AGAIN: **3rd Consequence**
  - When a child has inflicted harm twice (1st & 2nd Consequences) within a 6-month time frame, they reach 3rd Consequence. Parents must either keep their child with them in the sanctuary or stay with the child in Sojourn Kids **for the next three times they attend Sojourn Kids [after they've been background-checked; they must wear a SK shirt when in the room]**. This is to ensure that the child receives one-on-one attention to help catch negative emotions before they evolve into harm toward another child.
  - After 3 weeks, the child may come to SK alone. If any other offenses occur, the count begins over. In other words, another 6-month time frame begins.

4. If the child inflicts harm on a friend WHILE THE PARENT IS WITH THEM(during 3rd consequence): 4th Consequence

- Child and parent will be asked to leave SK for the day & not return for the next two Sundays
- Fill in the 4th Consequence box on the incident report for the child inflicting harm
- Fill out an Incident Report for the child injured & share with their parent at Check Out
- If the child injured does not calm down after 10 minutes, contact parents to come pick up the child and have them sign the Incident Report