



# Policies & Procedures

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## Sojourn Kids Team Members:

Thank you for your interest in serving with Sojourn Kids. I've served as the Sojourn Heights Director of Sojourn Kids since March 2013. For three years, I worked part-time as a nanny while working part-time for Sojourn. As of July 2017, I am now full-time. I taught high school English for three years before coming on staff with Sojourn. I find joy in serving Sojourn in this capacity, and I'm overjoyed to see children and families growing within our Sojourn family.

We highly value you, our team members, and the ministry you provide to our children on Sundays. We also value our children and want to provide a safe and nurturing environment for them to actively learn about the God who loves them. We have developed this handbook, which includes our policies and procedures, to protect not only our children, but also you and Sojourn's mission. Please understand that these rules will be strictly enforced. It is therefore imperative that you know and observe the contents of this handbook.

Caitlin Reyes  
Grace and peace,

**Caitlin Reyes**  
Director of Sojourn Kids  
caitlin@sojournheights.org



## OUR MISSION

Sojourn Kids exists to help parents raise kids who love and trust Jesus, and we do this by providing a space 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 serve Him 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.

## GENERAL NOTES

- All team members must know and understand the applicable policies and procedures within this handbook. Strict adherence is a must.
- Personal belongings must remain off of the floor and out of the reach of children.
- Phones are to be on vibrate/silent while in the classroom and used only for emergencies.
- Please eat any personal snacks outside of the Sojourn Kids classroom or before kids arrive, unless you are eating what the kids eat at snack time.
- Contact parents in the event that: (1) a child is completely inconsolable (after at least ten minutes of care), (2) a child is ill or injured, (3) a child intentionally hits/pushes/bites/harms a friend in class (see **Incident Reports**), or (4) a child is a danger to himself/herself or other children. Use the walkie talkie in the room to ask the Security Usher to contact the parent through the system.
- The Council of Elders and the Director of Sojourn Kids reserve the right to remove any team member from the Sojourn Kids team at any time and for any reason.

## PRAYER

Prayer is an integral part of all we do. Pray for kids, fellow team members, and parents before kids arrive, while you're with kids, and as you clean. Consider that God is using you to plant seeds in kids' hearts. Consider that God may use you to welcome visitors, demonstrate grace to a child or another team member, etc. Pray over all of that (and more) as you prepare to serve and even in the midst of serving.



## OUR CLASSROOMS

### **Baby Room:** 3-18 months

Classroom caregivers pray over the babies and sing songs with them while they nurture the kids in their care. We have lesson content 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 Room:** 18-30 months

Classroom caregivers play and sing with kids, while praying for them and pointing them to Jesus. In this classroom, kids are introduced to *The Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum through short Bible stories and activities that align with that day's story.

### **2's & 3's:** 30-48 months

Same as the toddlers.

### **PreK+** age 4 - kindergarten & / **Lower Elementary (11 AM only):** 1st-3rd grade

Caregivers and teachers in these classes further share *The Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum, which teaches that the Bible is one unified story of God's redemption through Jesus.

***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 a future!

## ANNUAL BACKGROUND SCREENING & SAFETY TRAINING

Parents entrust their children into our care, and we are committed to keeping them safe. All team members that interact with children **must** consent to a background screening. We will rerun background checks every calendar year. Every 3 years, we will send team members a 30-minute child safety training video to watch and complete a quiz to ensure your ability to keep children safe in our care, as well as identify and report child abuse.

## SK TEAM TRAININGS

Training is an important, effective, and required step in fulfilling your responsibility as a team member. The Director of Sojourn Kids and the SK Training Leads hold training sessions every quarter. Twice each year, these serve purely as volunteer orientations for new team members. Every February and August, SK Team Trainings serve as a refresher course for veterans in addition to welcoming newcomers. More than that, it's a time for us to say thank you for your service. We eat together, take time for celebrating what God's doing in Sojourn Kids, and Training Leads conduct team-specific trainings. These semi-annual trainings are mandatory. If you're unable to attend, you will need to attend a makeup session before serving again. It will be worth your time!



## ROLE DESCRIPTIONS - KNOW YOUR ROLE

- Director of Sojourn Kids: This role exists to oversee that the mission and vision are furthered and upheld through every aspect of Sojourn Kids. Primary responsibilities are to manage and care for team members, support and communicate with parents, and oversee Sundays in Sojourn Kids.
- Team Lead: Team Leads exist to help care for their specific team within Sojourn Kids. They ensure that the rest of the leadership team feels supported and valued.
- Training Lead: Training Leads help train new and current team members every quarter.
- Scheduling Lead: Scheduling Leads are responsible for creating the monthly scheduling and making sure that every role is filled week to week.
- Appreciation Lead: Appreciation Leads help plan the annual Appreciation Dinner as well as look for other opportunities to encourage the team.
- Classroom Coordinator: This individual is the one who leads and manages the classroom during the gathering. She/he helps things flow and makes sure the important things are done. This doesn't mean he/she does everything, but that they delegate and coordinate the flow of everything. This person also helps guide shadowing volunteers, answering any questions they may have.
- Support Volunteer: For those in the Toddler / 2's & 3's / PreK+ classrooms, this title is intended to indicate that this person will help however needed.
- Teacher: This is the person who teaches the Bible story and takes the lead in praying and facilitating lesson activities.
- Security Usher: Security Ushers exist to ensure that children remain safe during Sunday gatherings. The time commitment is two gatherings each month. The primary responsibilities include diligently keeping watch over the hallway and Sojourn Kids classrooms, assisting with technology, promptly communicate serving availability through Planning Center, and following through with commitments.
- Shadow Volunteer: Shadow Volunteers spend their initial time in the classroom learning by watching, doing, and asking questions. Even if there are few children, the shadow volunteer serves through the whole gathering in order to learn what the process looks like from the Team Meeting to the end of the clean-up following the gathering. The Classroom Coordinator guides them and answers any questions they may have as they serve.

*\*On days you serve, it is highly encouraged that you still prioritize attending a gathering that same day.\**

## STEPPING DOWN / CHANGING DIRECTIONS

If, after some time serving in a particular area you are not enjoying it or growing in your walk with Jesus, please talk with your Team Lead. There have been times when team members asked to move to a different age group or position, or they discovered that their gifts are better suited for a different Ministry Team. We want you to be where God means for you to be. Speak up about where you feel the Holy Spirit leading you to serve, and we'll support you in that.



## CLASSROOM RATIOS & PROMOTIONS

Sojourn Kids provides classrooms for the age groups noted in the chart below. We ask parents to promote their 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 August, meaning an incoming 1st-grader will be promoted into the Lower Elementary class, not at age 6, but the last Sunday in August as they enter 1st grade. We also invite parents to bring their kids into our Sunday Gatherings as early as they see fit for their children.

Room	Promotional Marker	Adult:Child Ratio
Babies	2-18 months / Infants, crawlers, new walkers	1:2
Toddlers	18-30 months / Proficient walkers to 2.5 yrs	1:4
2's & 3's	30-48 months / age 4	1:5
PreK +	Age 4 through end of Kindergarten	1:6
Lower Elementary	1st - 3rd grade	1:8

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, the Classroom Coordinator will radio to the Security Usher. We will evaluate the ratios in all our classrooms to see if we can move an adult over from another room. The Director of Sojourn Kids or another staff member may also be available to help.

If not, we will begin an overflow list. The team will inform parents, "I'm so sorry, but our classroom is currently at capacity. We're trying our best to get another team member so that we can make room for your child. Let me go ahead and write your child's name on our overflow list. When we're able to make room, we will send you a text from our check-in system."

## CURRICULUM

In our Baby Room, caregivers view their service as more than just babysitting. They pray over the infants. We also encourage caregivers to play an age-appropriate game prompted by that week's Bible story, and listen to worship music, inviting the little ones to dance and clap. With babies through our oldest kids, we use the *Gospel Project for Kids* curriculum, which teaches that the Bible is one unified story of God's redemption through Jesus. As they participate week after week, kids will begin to see how the Bible is one, big story centered around Jesus instead of individual, unrelated stories.



## SCHEDULING

- In advance of each new month, Scheduling Leads will remind team members to input any block-out dates for the upcoming month on Planning Center.
- Scheduling Leads create the schedule month-by-month. Once the schedule is created, team members are responsible for responding to the assigned role by clicking ACCEPT or DECLINE within the confirmation email or the Planning Center website/app **as soon as possible**.
- When you accept an invitation to serve on Planning Center, this represents your commitment to show up on the expected date and at the expected time. Please honor your commitment.
- If/When a you are no longer able to serve on the team, please notify the Scheduling Lead and/or Team Lead as early as possible.

*\*Again, on days you serve, it is highly encouraged that you still prioritize attending a gathering that same day.*

## COMMUNICATION

Team members are responsible for responding to emails from the Director of Sojourn Kids and Team Lead. We value your feedback, and your response allows us to more effectively plan for Sundays. Please take the time to read and respond in a timely fashion. We also understand that life can be unpredictable. In the event of a last-minute illness or emergency, please inform your Team Lead as soon as possible by declining the role on Planning Center and texting your Team Lead if it's less than 36 hours away from your scheduled time. It is NOT the team member's responsibility to secure a substitute when absent, but it is necessary to communicate your unavailability.

## TYPICAL SUNDAY MORNING

Team members gather together for a team huddle 30 minutes prior to the gathering for which they're scheduled to serve. We'll discuss important reminders and pray together before taking our stations in classrooms and at the check-in counter. The following 5P's help everything run smoothly:

**Punctuality:** Punctuality is imperative because tardiness has a domino effect, placing undue stress on staff and fellow team members. This also contributes to an unsafe environment.

**Prayer:** Sundays are our designated time to gather as a whole body. If possible, please make it a priority to attend a gathering even on those Sundays when you are scheduled to serve.

**Preparation:** First, always wear your Sojourn Kids T-shirt. Second, print your check-in sticker. Third, familiarize yourself with materials provided for the lesson and review lesson before children arrive.

**Presentation:** Remember, parents are entrusting their children to us. This is no small thing, and that relationship hinges on trust. Please do your part to present Sojourn Kids as a safe, hospitable place.

**Post-Care:** Never release a child to a parent without the checkout sticker. Please radio the Security Usher if a parent needs a new tag. Team members must remain in the Sojourn Kids area until the last child has been picked up or until relieved by another team member. Prior to departure, make sure to clean the classroom according to the posted Cleaning Procedures.



## TWO-TO-A-ROOM POLICY

At least two team members shall remain together with children at ALL times, one of which must be female. Males will always serve alongside at least one female. Adults are never to be alone with a child behind closed doors. There should always be visible access through a door or window.

**Acceptable exceptions:** gushing wound / other medical emergency; if a female team member needs to step into a stall to help a child momentarily, doors must remain cracked open as a safeguard.

## PICK-UP SECURITY POLICY

As mentioned before, each child receives a name tag and secure check-out tag each time they come to Sojourn Kids. Parents must keep possession of the secure check-out tag. Apart from direct consent from the Gathering Coordinator, no adult may check-out a child without the corresponding security tag. If parents have children in multiple classrooms, they should hold on to the checkout sticker until they've checked out all children.

For parents who serve as SK team members: please stay in your designated room until the ratio allows for you to step out temporarily. Please be sure to help clean and tidy the room before leaving.

## PHYSICAL CONTACT

Sojourn is committed to protecting children, and we believe appropriate touch is part of a positive, nurturing environment. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by team members.

Accompanied by good judgment, the following are appropriate ways to touch children:

- meet children at their eye level by bending down or sitting.
- listen to children with your ears, eyes, and heart.
- place an arm around or a brief, assuring pat on the shoulder.
- walking hand in hand to an activity or holding a child's hand as you listen or speak.
- holding a crying child who is 4 or under.
- light, short congratulatory or greeting hugs.
- handshakes, high-fives, and fist bumps.

The following is a non-exhaustive list. Team members shall NEVER:

- touch a child in anger or disgust.
- touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive (e.g. kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging or tickling, etc.).
- touch a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit.
- touch a child's private parts (with the exception of diaper or bathroom procedures).
- be alone with a child.

Physical contact in any form should be above reproach. The personal behavior of staff members and team members must foster trust at all times. Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. **A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.** Also, to be above reproach and to maintain a controlled, safe environment for kids, we **will not tickle or chase children in Sojourn Kids** (unless participating in an organized lesson activity).



## WELLNESS POLICY

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

- Fever of 100 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 to pick up child. Team members also text parents in the event that: (1) child is completely inconsolable (after at least ten minutes of care), (2) child is ill or injured, (3) a child intentionally hits/pushes/bites/harms a friend in class (see **Incident Reports**), or (4) child is a danger to himself/herself or other children. 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.

## INJURIES / FIRST AID

If any injury occurs during class time, Sojourn Kids team members are permitted to administer Band-Aids and ice packs, and those who are trained -- Epi-Pens and CPR. Please use the first aid kit provided in your room for minor injuries. The Classroom Coordinator will complete an Incident Report form. Fill it out completely and place one carbon copy in the Classroom Binder and place one in the child's bag. Be sure to inform parents of the incident once they pick up their child. At the end of class, please share the Incident Report(s) with the Security Usher to record on our Master List.

If there is an injury in the classroom, and the child returns to normal behavior within 10 minutes, complete the Incident Report and alert the parent at pick-up time. If there is an emergency and a parent needs to be located immediately, the Gathering Coordinator will locate them in the sanctuary. **All injuries must be reported because some seemingly trivial injuries can turn out to be serious. DO NOT give children medications without a parent present. A child's epi-pen is an exception, if you're trained to administer this.**

## CLEANING

It is very important that we keep our facilities clean. Encourage children to pick up after themselves (Tinys can tidy), even though you then dump the items out after they leave to spray them and put them back in place. It is the your responsibility to leave the classroom clean. See Cleaning Procedures posted by the door of each classroom.

## DISCIPLINE

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 (meaning, the child didn't just trip and fall into another child):
  - IMMEDIATELY remove 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. Ask the parent to address the issue with their child outside the classroom for about 2 minutes, then they may return to class.
  - If the child inflicts harm on a friend again, he/she must leave class for the day as a 2nd consequence. Tick the box on the same incident report for 2nd consequence.
2. Complete an additional Incident Report for the child who was hurt.
  - If a child shrugs it off and moves on, no need to contact the parent then.
  - If a child is still inconsolable after 10 minutes, contact parents.
  - Regardless, show the parents of the child who was harmed 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. Here are the consequences of this behavior:
  - After three 2nd-tier-consequence-offenses within a 6-month time frame, a parent will be asked to stay with the child in Sojourn Kids during the gathering. 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.



## 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. Prepare ahead of time so that all supplies are within reach. Never leave a child alone on the table, even if just for a moment. As a courtesy to parents, all diapers shall be checked and changed, if necessary, before children are checked out. Specific diaper changing policies are posted at diaper changing stations.

When taking children to the restroom, give them as much privacy as possible. Stand in the doorway with the door ajar, if they require supervision. **No man or teenager may assist a child in the restroom.** 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 to the best of your ability. Up to 2 girls may enter the female restroom at a time, and only 1 boy may enter the male restroom at a time. This is to minimize potential privacy concerns.

If a child in PreK+ needs his/her diaper changed, a female caregiver may change the child's diaper in the Baby Room. If the Gathering Coordinator is unable to step in, it's permitted to temporarily forego the two-to-a-room policy for the few minutes it'll take to change the diaper. Alert Security.

## ALLERGIES / FEEDING

We serve children with different dietary needs. **Always check the child's sticker / bag tag for food allergies before serving snacks.** Please sanitize kids' hands before and after snack. Babies should be fed **ONLY** what the parent provides for that specific child. You may eat what we serve the kids when they eat. Please eat any of your own snacks outside of the classroom. Don't let kids share snacks.

## PROHIBITIONS

Staff members and team members are prohibited from the possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, pain medication that impairs reaction time, and/or any illegal drugs while serving with Sojourn Kids. No team member may possess the following:

- Sharp objects
- Sporting goods
- Guns and firearms
- Tools
- Martial arts and self defense items
- Explosive and flammable materials
- Disabling chemicals
- Any other dangerous item

## REPORTING

Team members and staff are under obligation to immediately report and document:

- Incidents of abuse or imminent danger: threats of or actual physical injury upon a child or team member, sexual offense, or any exposure to verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, even if only reasonable suspicion

Follow this process for reporting:

- Contact the Director of Sojourn Kids or any elder.
- Contact the Texas Abuse Hotline and follow the necessary steps.



## **EMERGENCY CODE SYSTEM**

### **CODE WHITE: MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

Remain calm. Divert the attention of the other children.

Report medical needs or concerns through the classroom walkie-talkie.

Keep victim still and quiet.

### **CODE BLUE: WEATHER EMERGENCY**

Remain calm.

Await further instructions in the event of dangerous weather.

### **CODE RED: FIRE**

Remain calm.

Follow evacuation plan.

Do not attempt to put out the fire.

### **CODE GREEN: MISSING CHILD/OUT OF CONTROL**

Remain calm.

Report the following via the walkie-talkie:

- Name, age, race, and sex
- Hair color and color of clothing
- Room where child was checked-in

If a child or the whole class is out of control, also use this code to alert through the walkie-talkie.

### **CODE BLACK: STRANGER/WEAPON/UNAUTHORIZED PRESENCE**

Security Usher announces CODE BLACK.

Team members:

- Remain calm.
- Lock all classroom doors (be sure to latch the half doors as well).
- Corral children calmly to sit on the floor out of sight.
- Sing quiet songs and talk quietly with the kids and.
- Wait for further instruction.

### **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 Director of Sojourn Kids.

Our team members are a valuable part of our ministry. Team members are always needed. If you are not currently serving in Sojourn Kids and would like to, please contact the Director of Sojourn Kids.