The Journey Homeschool Child Protection Policy

Statement of Purpose

The Journey Inc., referred to as Journey Homeschool Co-op, seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our co-op community. We recognize that we live in a fallen world and that Christians are not immune from worldly influences. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children of The Journey Homeschool Co-op from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our teachers and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “ teacher” includes paid persons who work with children. “Volunteers” includes unpaid persons who work with children. Volunteers are registered parental members of the co-op. “Board Members” include long-standing member volunteers who work in the capacity of co-op coordinators.

Procedures for the Evaluation/Selection of Teachers

All persons interested in teaching at the co-op will be screened as follows:

* Personal Interview- a face-to-face interview with no less than two Board Members will be conducted with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. Every applicant must adhere to The Journey Homeschool Group Statement of Faith, the Journey Guidelines, and the Journey Child Protection Policy.
* Reference checks- at least two of the applicant's references will be checked.
* A confidential application that allows a confidential background check of public records. A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Board Members. (The background check is updated every three years).

Note: The results of background checks as part of the application process shall not be divulged with anyone other than designated Journey Co-op Board Members. The Board Members will disclose information on a need-to-know basis only. Applications will be confidentially disposed of after three years.

Safety Through Presence Policy for Teachers and Volunteers

Classroom Protocol:

* Classroom doors may be closed for noise control during teaching time as long as there is not a one-adult/one-child situation in the room. No teacher or volunteer should be alone with a child behind closed doors without the parent’s permission.
* If there is a one-adult/one-child situation, three options are available:
  + The classroom door must remain open,
  + An additional volunteer can sit in on the classroom, or
  + You can move to a more public location.
* In the case of private lessons, parental consent must be obtained to have a closed door.
* If youth helpers are used, they will not be alone for an extended time with the children.
* Context and situation must be taken into consideration around appropriate touch. Positive expressions of touch include times of celebration, prayer, comfort, and redirection (gentle hand on shoulders) and is best practiced only in observable places or when in the presence of others to avoid misinterpretation. Be vigilant on behalf of the safety of our children.

Restroom Protocol:

* For the protection of all, volunteers and teachers should never be alone with a child in a restroom with a closed door. Volunteers and teachers should be sure to prop open the door if they are using the restroom.
* When taking a young child to a restroom outside the preschool/kindergarten room, keep the main door to the restroom open while the child is in the restroom. Remain outside the restroom where you can hear the child and ensure the child’s safety.

Teacher Code of Conduct

It is our desire that students would learn to glorify God through the example they see in our teachers and volunteers. As a Christian homeschool co-op, we expect our teachers to abide by Christian values.

It is the policy of The Journey Homeschool Co-op **not** to administer corporal punishment. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Verbal punishment in the form of harassment, yelling, or belittling is also not permissible. Abusive behaviors (as described in the following list) will not be tolerated. If assistance is needed with discipline, the teacher will consult with a Board Member and the parent will be notified. The Journey Homeschool Co-op has an established discipline policy available in our Guidelines including appropriate child conduct.

If you are on social media that can be observed by a child, the teacher must ensure that the content is appropriate. Fostering or engaging in an inappropriate relationship with a child is strictly prohibited and will be considered terms for immediate dismissal. This includes but is not limited to the sending and receiving of inappropriate photos and texts or grooming a child in such a way as to foster a sexual relationship. Email should be the main source of out-of-class communication with children with the understanding that it is accessible by the parents.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

* Physical Abuse- any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
* Sexual Abuse- any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, pornography, showing or sending inappropriate photos, and grooming behaviors.
* Neglect- depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.
* Verbal Abuse- Using words to demean or frighten someone, such as belittling, yelling, insulting, and threatening.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this co-op becomes aware of behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate, or any incident reported to them by a vulnerable person, this should be reported **immediately** to the Board Members for further action. Further action **may** include a notification to the parent or guardian, removal from the premises of the individual involved in the allegation, and/or a report to child protection services or law enforcement.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child is injured while at co-op, the following steps will be followed:

* For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, a teacher or volunteer will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, ice, etc) as appropriate and will notify the child’s parent of the injury at the time the child is picked up. The Journey first aid kit is located in a bin at the front counter.
* For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent will be immediately summoned in addition to a Board Member. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. Emergency forms are kept on file in binders at the front counter for each child.

Note: Parents agree to assume all responsibility for their children while participating in The Journey. Parents also agree to accept any and all financial responsibility for any medical or legal expenses that may occur due to taking part in any group activity. The group and all its members, teachers, and First Covenant Church and all its employees and members shall be exempt from any legal actions or financial responsibility due to any injury, etc., that may occur during any Journey activities.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of The Journey Homeschool Co-op **not** to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medication policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions. Parents of such children should address their situation with their child’s teacher to develop a plan of action.

Severe Weather/Tornado Emergency Plan

* If the weather worsens to the point that The Journey Homeschool Co-op needs to close early for safety reasons, etc., parents will be notified ASAP via email.
* In the event of a tornado warning (a tornado has been sighted either visually or by radar), we will:
  + Notify teachers, board members, and any appropriate volunteers.
  + Close all doors, stay away from windows.
  + Move all children, volunteers, and teachers to a preplanned shelter area which is the hallway connecting the study hall to the classrooms.
  + Remain in the shelter area until an all-clear is given.

Fire Alarm Plan

When a fire alarm sounds, the goal is to get out of the building quickly and safely:

1. Fire alarm sounds.
2. Evacuate by proceeding in an orderly fashion to the nearest exit. Leave all belongings.
3. Go to the designated meeting place, which is the swing set area. Children are to stay with their teacher/monitor. Teachers will account for their class.
4. A Board Member will do a final check through the building.
5. Do not re-enter the building until the all-clear is given.

Note: Do not check if it is a “false alarm.” If the alarm sounds, evacuate the building immediately. Teachers in classrooms will assist their children.

Weapons Threat Resources

Our society has seen recent situations of weapons threats (such as active shooter situations) and it is important to have an idea of what to do. The Department of Homeland Security recommends a “Run, Hide, Fight” approach. Please see the following for more information:

* Homeland Security Website: www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness
* Video (6 min.): http://bit.ly/1qtOh91
* Video (8 min.): <http://bit.ly/2wsdMnK>

TEACHER AND BOARD MEMBER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF AND AGREEMENT WITH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FORM

The Journey Homeschool Child Protection Policy was created to to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our co-op community. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children of The Journey Homeschool Co-op from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our teachers and volunteers from false accusations. In the event that the Journey Homeschool Co-op Board feels that additions or changes need to be made to The Journey Homeschool Child Protection Policy, the teachers will be made aware and a copy will be provided to all current and future teachers.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of The Journey Homeschool Child Protection Policy and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and follow the expectations contained in this Policy and any future changes made to the policy. I further acknowledge that failure to adhere to the policies contained within The Journey Homeschool Child Protection Policy could lead to termination of my contract with Journey Inc. (See Teacher Contract for details.)

TEACHER/BOARD MEMBER NAME (printed)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER/BOARD MEMBER SIGNATURE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DATE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_