

Amended 5.28.25

The Journey Homeschool Child Protection Policy

Statement of Purpose

The Journey Inc., referred to as The 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 to 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 Co-op 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 for 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).

***New Vetting of Board Members**

All persons interested in serving on our co-op board will be screened as follows:

- A confidential application that allows for 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).

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***New Screening of Parent Volunteers**

All parent volunteers who work directly with children (including classroom helpers and hall monitors) must complete a background check prior to the start of the school year during which they will be volunteering:

- The background check will be conducted through a reputable third-party provider selected by the Board.
- A disqualifying offense that will preclude an individual from working with children will be determined by the Board.
- Volunteers who do not complete the background check by the published deadline will not be permitted to serve in any capacity involving direct contact with children. This includes classroom roles and any positions where a volunteer may be unsupervised with students.
- Background checks will be updated every 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:

- During school hours the doors of the main restrooms are to remain open. The restrooms by the sanctuary space are off limits to Journey families and students.
- 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 that the main door to the restroom remains open.
- 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.

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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.

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 to the parents.

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 section, Defining Abuse) 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.

In the event that a child should become violent and threatening to themselves or others, and the Teacher reasonably believes that there is imminent danger of death or bodily harm to the child, peers, and/or the Teacher, it is within the Teacher's purview to take measures to defend themselves and the students. The Teachers may take measures to neutralize the emergency situation as they deem necessary. Should this situation arise the following actions must be taken as soon as the situation is under control and the safety of all children has been secured.

1. Contact a Board Member immediately.
2. The family will be notified.
3. As necessary, the appropriate authorities will be notified.

Please note, in accordance with Journey Guidelines, actions by children that show physical aggression toward fellow students, Volunteers, or Teachers will be taken very seriously and may be grounds for immediate dismissal from The Journey Homeschool Co-op.

***New Training and Education on Child Protection**

- **Training Videos:** In recognition of our shared responsibility to protect our students and teachers and maintain a safe environment, both the Teachers and Board Members will engage in online video training aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness of our Child Protection Policies. This training is to be renewed every three (3) years. We encourage all participants to provide feedback to ensure the training remains effective and relevant in promoting a safe environment.

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- **Updates and Feedback:** The training materials may be updated periodically to reflect new policies, best practices, or legal requirements related to child protection.
- **Family Education:** Families interested in child abuse prevention videos can access them via the following link: <https://ministrysafe.com/areyouprepared/#>

Defining 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.

*New Reporting Obligations for Abuse/Incidents:

In the event that any individual involved in the care of children at this co-op becomes aware of behavior that appears abusive or inappropriate, or any incident reported to them by a vulnerable person, they are required to **immediately** report it to a Board Member for further action. The subsequent steps will include:

- **Notification:** The parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child will be notified as soon as possible.
- **Immediate Action:** The individual implicated in the allegation may be removed from the premises pending investigation. The Board will inform the individual that they may not participate in the co-op or any co-op-sponsored activities until the investigation is complete.
- **Reporting to Authorities:** As necessary, the allegation will be reported to child protection services and/or law enforcement.
- **Confidentiality and Integrity:** All parties involved in the investigation are expected to maintain confidentiality to ensure the integrity of the process.
- **Child Protective Services:** Pierce County Department of Health and Human Services may be reached at 715-273-6766 or online <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cps/reportabuse>

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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 Homeschool Co-op. 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, 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. 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(s) 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 and 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.

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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>