

Commonwealth Chapel

Guide to Children's Ministries

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Introduction and Philosophy of Children’s Ministries

Welcome to Children’s Ministries at Commonwealth Chapel. We are delighted to serve you and your children. In accordance with Commonwealth Chapel’s mission of being a Christ-centered community dedicated to bringing healing, health, and hope to the city of Richmond, Children’s Ministries strives to provide a safe, nurturing environment in which each child experiences the love of Christ. We are aware that Jesus emphasizes the importance of young children (in Mark 9:36-37: “He took a little child and had him stand among them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me””.)

The desire of Children’s Ministries is to minister to families through providing supervision and stimulating activities for children during church services. This allows parents and guardians to attend worship services without feeling directly responsible for their children during these times. In addition, Children’s Ministries activities allow children to build relationships with other children and volunteers. Through love, care, play, music, and education, children are taught about Christ. Children’s Ministries aspires to help children start on a lifelong journey with Jesus.

Commonwealth Chapel is committed to serving the needs of our community. Children’s Ministries is always open to suggestions, concerns, and questions. We value the involvement of each individual in our ministry. We could not function successfully without your support! Please feel free to communicate the Point Person of Children’s Ministries at any time.

Instruction on Child Development

Childhood has its own way of seeing, thinking and feeling and nothing is more foolish than to try to substitute ours [adult] for theirs.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

In order to provide quality care and activities for children, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of child development. This knowledge will assist Children’s Ministries to best meet the needs of each child by developing appropriate activities for children of different ages and abilities. The following charts may be useful in determining the needs and abilities of children.

Infants/Toddlers: Physical Development

Milestone	Age of Onset
Sits unassisted	8 to 12 months
Pulls to a standing position	8 to 12 months
Feeds self with fingers	8 to 10 months
Waves “bye-bye”	8 to 10 months
Crawls	10 to 12 months
Drinks from a cup	10 to 12 months

Uses spoon proficiently	12 to 18 months
Scribbles with crayon	12 to 18 months
Walks independently	18 months
Walks and runs well	2 to 3 years

Infants/Toddlers: Cognitive Development

Milestone	Age of Onset
Coos responsively	Birth to 3 months
Smiles responsively	3 to 4 months
Smiles at self in mirror	3 to 4 months
Laughs out loud	3 to 4 months
Plays peek-a-boo	3 to 4 months
Shows displeasure	5 to 6 months
Babbles	6 to 8 months
Understands simple commands	12 months
Follows directions	2 years
Puts two to three words together	2 years
Uses sentences	2 to 3 years

Infants/Toddlers/Children: Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Stage	Characteristics
Sensorimotor (birth to 2 years)	Infant is egocentric; he or she gradually learns to coordinate sensory and motor activities and develops a beginning sense of objects existing apart from the self.
Preoperational (2 to 7 years)	The child remains primarily egocentric but discover rules (regularities) that can be applied to new incoming information. The child tends to overgeneralize rules, however, and thus makes many cognitive errors.
Concrete operations (7 to 11 years)	The child can solve concrete problems through the application of logical problem-solving strategies.
Formal operations (11 years and beyond)	The person becomes able to solve real and hypothetical problems using abstract concepts.

Infants/Toddlers/Children: Erikson's Stages Psychosocial Development

Life Stage	Psychosocial Challenge	Characteristic
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Infancy (birth to about 1 year)	Basic trust versus mistrust	Infants must form trusting relationships with caregivers or they will learn to distrust the world.
Toddlerhood (about 1 to 3 years)	Autonomy versus shame and doubt	Toddlers must develop self-confidence and a sense of mastery over themselves and their worlds and they use newly developed motor skills or they will develop shame and doubt about their inability to develop control.
Early Childhood (3 to 5 years)	Initiative versus guilt	Young children must develop a growing capacity to plan and initiate actions or they may feel guilt about their taking initiative.
Middle childhood (6 to 11 years)	Industry versus inferiority	School-aged children must develop a sense of competence to master and complete tasks or they learn to feel inferiority or incompetent.
Adolescence (11 to 20 years)	Identity versus role confusion	Adolescents must develop a sense of who they are and where they are going in life or they become confused about their identity.

The Role of Play in Infancy and Toddlerhood

Types of Infant Play:

Vocal play: playful vocalizing with grunts, squeals, trills, vowels, etc., to experiment with sound and have fun with it.

Interactive play: Initiating interactions with caregivers (at about 4-5 months), by smiling and vocalizing, to communicate and make connection.

Exploratory play with objects: Exploring objects with eyes, mouth, and hands to learn about their shape, color, texture, movement, and sounds and to experience pleasure.

Baby games: participating in caregiver-initiated ritualized, repetitive games, such as peek-a-boo, that contain humor, suspense, and excitement and build an emotional bond.

Types of Toddler Play:

Functional play: engaging in simple, repetitive motor movements

Constructive play: creating and constructing objects.

Make-believe play: acting out everyday functions and tasks and playing with an imaginary friend.

Do's and Don'ts of Getting Access to Play in Progress:

Do's

Watch what's going on.

Figure out the play theme.

Enter the area.

Plug into the action.

Hold off making suggestions about how to change the action.

Don'ts

Don't ask questions for information (if you can't tell what's going on, you'll mess it up).

Don't mention yourself or your reactions to what is going on.

Don't disagree or criticize what is happening.

Hutchinson, E.D. (2003). *Dimensions of human behavior: The changing life course*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Commonwealth Chapel Children's Ministries will strive to be educated regarding child development in an effort to provide effective activities and programs for children. Please don't hesitate to ask questions or voice concerns or suggestions related to appropriate ways of interacting with children, activities offered, etc.

In regard to child development, please inform the Point Person for Children's Ministries of any concerns related to children appearing to be dealing with physical or learning disabilities. In addition, please report any suspicion of child abuse to the Point Person for Children's Ministries or the Lead Pastor. Children's Ministries is responsible in providing a safe, loving environment for children. We take abuse allegations (from incidents occurring inside and outside of the church) seriously and are prepared to act as a voice for our children. Allegations can be kept confidential and appropriate action will be taken. Please partner with us in keeping our children safe and secure in our care.

Children's Ministries at Commonwealth Chapel

Children's Ministries at Commonwealth Chapel is experiencing growth and changes as we prepare to better serve the church community. Children's Ministries is currently broken into various divisions to minister to different ages of children.

Infants

Our nursery provides a nurturing and loving environment for infants who are not yet walking steadily. Infants are held, played with, fed (if necessary), and changed throughout the service. Our nursery is equipped with a swing, exer-saucers, and various seats for the infants. In addition, we have cribs/pack-n-plays that can be used for sleeping infants.

Toddlers

Our toddler room allows young children (those who walk steadily through age 3 and fully potty trained) to play and interact with other children as well as volunteers. These children learn songs, listen to stories, and are taught simple Bible lessons. Children receive a snack mid-way through the service. Toddlers are changed and/or assisted with toileting when necessary.

Preschoolers

Our preschool room provides an environment in which children (ages 3 and fully potty trained through kindergarten) can play, interact with others, and be taught a Bible lesson. The children often participate in singing, games, and crafts to allow for hands-on learning. Preschoolers may be brought to the classroom before the start of the service, or they may stay in the service for worship and come to the classroom mid-way through the service. The children play for the first part of the service, and the lesson/craft portion of the class begins once all of the children have come. All children receive a snack during this lesson/craft time.

First through Fifth Graders

Children in elementary school stay with their families for the worship portion of the service. Once dismissed from service, these children come downstairs and participate in various activities. A Bible lesson is taught, and children are often actively involved in the lesson. Children are encouraged to build relationships with each other as well as the teacher. The lessons serve to increase Biblical knowledge and help children grow in their relationships with Christ.

Information for Parents and Guardians

Check-in Procedures:

Each room has a check in area. The infant/toddler check in area is located at the bottom of the stairs, at the white shelving unit near the entrance to the nursery. The preschool check in is located inside the preschool classroom. Please sign your child in and include all necessary

information. In the “special instructions” column, please include any and all information of which volunteers should be aware (i.e. allergies, snacks, napping routine, etc.).

*We are currently working toward a new pager system that will allow each parent to have a pager once they drop off their child. Each pager will be numbered, and we will then be able to reach parents as necessary. This system will be in place soon.

Please label all of your child’s belongings. We have sticker tags and hanging tags available to assist you with this.

Child Drop-off:

You may drop off your child beginning from 15 minutes prior to the start of the service. No child should ever be left unattended in the nursery or preschool classroom. Please remain with your child until the Children’s Ministries volunteers are ready to receive your child.

What to Bring:

- Bottles or juice cups
- Extra diapers
- Pacifiers if needed
- Diaper bags
- Extra change of clothes for emergencies
- Special snack items if required

Pick-up Procedures:

By the time service is over, your child will be anxious to see you. Please pick your child up personally and immediately after the service is over. We hope you will enjoy visiting with others after you pick up your child. Your consideration and thoughtfulness are greatly appreciated.

Please refrain from entering the nursery when coming to pick up your child. We are aware that the entryway becomes congested during child pick-up. However, many safety concerns arise when individuals enter the nursery area. Please wait near the nursery door, and a volunteer will bring your child to you.

Helpful Hints:

Sometimes during the early years, your child may have difficulty adjusting to new situations without you.

- Resist the temptation to have older siblings accompany the children. This is not allowed.
- Please be patient and talk positively about the nursery to your child.

- Encourage your child.
- Refrain from checking on your child during the service unless you are paged.
- Rest assured, we will page you if necessary.

Child Sickness Policy:

If your child has symptoms of sickness, please do not bring them to the nursery. While the spread of some sickness is unavoidable in a nursery setting, we can help reduce it drastically by being considerate and following these guidelines.

- Sickness includes any fever (temperature over 100 degrees F), diarrhea, thick green/yellow mucous from nose, rashes, vomiting, or any infection diagnosed by a physician that has not been under treatment for at least 24 hours.
- Sickness also includes chicken pox, rotovirus, skin infections, or eye infections (unless on antibiotic for at least 24 hours).
- Children with open skin lesions or other open wounds will not be admitted to the nursery unless the wound is suitably bandaged; open wounds suffered during church activities must be immediately bandaged by volunteers wearing gloves.
- Children who exhibit frequent tendency to bite will only be admitted to the nursery if they are closely supervised by a parent until this pattern disappears.

Please be considerate of other children and families when making decisions to bring your child to the nursery.

Information for Volunteers

Thank you for your willingness to serve as part of our Children’s Ministries team. We look forward to working with you to create a safe, loving, and nurturing environment for the children of Commonwealth Chapel.

All volunteers must complete a screening application and attend a training seminar in order to volunteer in Children’s Ministries. Training sessions will be offered periodically to allow new volunteers to join our team.

Procedures for Volunteering:

Nursery and Toddler Room:

- Nursery volunteers may wear comfortable clothes in order to feel free to play with the children.
- Volunteers should arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the service.
- Please greet children and families with a happy face and a warm, welcoming voice.
- Make sure each child has a name label on them as well as on their belongings.
- Make sure that parents have signed their child in and specified any special instructions.
- Feel free to take out any of the toys in the nursery. The infants love to see and explore new objects!

- Please be sure to clean all used toys (using Clorox disinfectant wipes) in order to prevent the spread of germs.
- Be sure to change each infant's diaper prior to the end of the service. Always wipe down the changing station after each diaper change. Parents will be comforted in knowing that their child did not sit in a soiled diaper.
- When parents arrive to pick up their children, check to make sure that all of the child's belongings are given back to the parents.
- After all of the children have been picked up please clean up the room. This includes putting toys away, wiping down the shelves and dirty toys, vacuuming, emptying the trash (including the diaper pail), and putting soiled laundry in a plastic trash bag.

Preschool classroom:

- Greet children and families with a happy face and a warm, welcoming voice.
- Make sure that each child is signed in on the sheet in the preschool room.
- Allow the children to free play until 35 minutes prior to the end of the service. Encourage the children to clean up and get ready for the lesson.
- Utilize the Hands-On Bible Curriculum to teach the lesson assigned to your particular week. Assist the children with the craft/game/activity specified for the lesson.
- After the children finish the activity, serve each child a snack (after reviewing the sign-in sheet to be certain of any possible food allergies/restrictions).
- Encourage the children to clean up after snack time.
- If time permits, allow the children to free play before the parents arrive.
- Make sure that children do not leave the classroom without having their parent pick them up.
- After all of the children have been picked up, please clean up the room. This includes putting toys away, wiping down the shelves and dirty toys, vacuuming, emptying the trash, and putting any soiled laundry in a plastic trash bag.

Guidelines for Discipline:

We strongly believe that a child's discipline is the responsibility of the parents. However, when children are in the care of Children's Ministries, we will follow these guidelines:

1. Use child's name to get attention. Look them in the eye.
2. Attempt to redirect inappropriate behavior.
3. Immediately stop mistreatment of others using a firm but soft voice. ("Don't hit or bite. Hitting hurts our friends.")
4. Use of a "time-out". Explain inappropriate behavior to child.
5. Contact parents if mistreatment of others continues.

Universal Standard Precautions:

- Wash your hands often (especially after nose wipes and diaper changes), or use the anti-bacterial hand wash.
- Use gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids, including changing diapers, blood, vomit, etc.

- Wash hands with soap and water after removing gloves.

Safety Issues:

- Always follow a 2-person rule. This means that at least two volunteers should be in each room with children. If this is impossible to maintain during a given service, make sure that doors remain open and everything happening in the room is clearly visible to people passing by.
- No volunteer should ever take a child out of the room alone (i.e. trying to calm a crying toddler). These situations can be harmful for volunteers, children, and the church.
- Make sure that each child is picked up by the correct person. Waiting until parents come to the door with a tag matching the child's pager number will greatly assist this process.

Rotation Schedule Changes:

The Director of Children's Ministries makes every effort to create a 6-week rotation schedule for the nursery, toddler, and preschool rooms. We value your service and greatly appreciate your willingness to minister to our children. Please make every effort to be present when you are scheduled to volunteer. If you are unable to make your scheduled time to volunteer, please find a replacement for your position and notify the Director of any changes. This will allow us to best serve the children and families at Commonwealth Chapel by assuring that we have a sufficient number of volunteers for each service. Thank you so much for your cooperation!

Youth Volunteers:

We greatly value our youth and their service within our community. We welcome volunteers who are at least 10 years old. Youth wishing to volunteer in Children's Ministries must have parental approval. Youth volunteers will be supervised by adult volunteers. Youth can serve as part of the rotating schedule or speak with the Director of Children's Ministries about other possible roles (i.e. teaching toddler classes, becoming a leader for various projects, etc.).

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