



Introduction and Philosophy

Welcome to Commonwealth Chapel's Children's Ministries. We are delighted to serve 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, we strive to provide a safe, nurturing environment in which each child experiences the love of Christ.

Our desire is to minister to kids and families. We do this through two primary avenues. First, we offer all children age-appropriate worship experiences that are both interactive and Bible-based. Secondly, we seek to empower and equip parents and guardians with tools to be the spiritual leaders of their households.

Commonwealth Kids

Helping parents raise Christ-centered families.

Information for Parents & Guardians

Age Groups:

Our children are divided into the following groups:

Infants: birth through pre-walking

T1 Toddlers: 12 months to 23 months

T2 Toddlers: 24 months to 3yrs and not-yet potty trained

PreSchool: fully potty-trained, 3-5 yrs

K-2nd: have begun K through 2nd

3rd-5th: have begun 3rd through 5th

We promote elementary-aged children from one level to the next on Labor Day Sunday each year.

Check-in Procedures

Parents/guardians must sign in and out when dropping off children and inform workers of any special needs (i.e. food allergies, potty training, feeding, napping routine, etc.).

You will receive a ticket with a number on it for each child (who will each wear a matching number sticker). Your

ticket is your means of getting your child back. You may give your ticket to another person (family member, etc.). We will only dismiss a particular child to an adult who has the matching number stub. Teachers must still check numbers and tickets with parents with whom they are familiar. No ticket, no child. If you lose the ticket, you must show a photo ID to the director on duty and they will match your name to the name that signed the child in that morning.

Child Drop-off

Children may be dropped off 15 minutes prior to the start of service once workers are ready to receive them. Please label all of your child's belongings. We have labels and tags available to assist you with this.

Child Pick-up

Please pick your child up personally and as soon as possible after the service is over. Please refrain from entering the classroom when coming to pick up your child. For the safety of the children, wait by the classroom door for a teacher to bring your child to you.

Child Sickness Policy

If your child has symptoms of sickness, please do not bring them to the classrooms. While the spread of some sickness is unavoidable, we can help reduce it drastically

by being considerate and following these guidelines.

- Sickness includes any fever (temp over 100 degrees F), diarrhea, thick green and yellow mucus from nose, rashes, vomiting, or any infection diagnosed by a doctor that has not been treated for at least 24 hours. Infections include chicken pox, rotavirus, skin or eye infections, etc..
- Children with open skin lesions or wounds will not be admitted unless they are suitably bandaged: any wounds occurring while child is in our care will be immediately bandaged by workers wearing gloves, and parents will be notified. Our classrooms are equipped with first aid kits.
- Children who exhibit a frequent tendency to bite will only be admitted if they are closely supervised by a parent until this pattern disappears.

Teacher Guidelines

You're Not a Babysitter

We consider someone who serves in any capacity in Commonwealth Kids a teacher. Not everyone will act in the role of a traditional teacher, but everyone who serves will in some way participate in holistically teaching children about Jesus Christ and leading them into a deeper relationship with Him. No matter which age group you are serving, “childcare” or “babysitting” are bad words around Commonwealth Kids. We believe that all teachers are ministers to these children, which is a lot more than just caring or sitting. We want to lead these kids into a deepening relationship with God through Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We also want to equip parents to be the primary spiritual leaders of their kids.

Application Process and Training

All teachers must apply to work in Commonwealth Kids. We check criminal and sex offender records, call personal references, and have application questions pertaining to a person's history in working with children and other pertinent information.

Teachers must attend our Commonwealth Kids University

at least once a year, which is offered bi-annually (each May and November). Teachers must also view a training video pertaining to basic safety and medical precautions as well as a video concerning sexual offenders and how to protect children in the church setting.

No Number, No Child

This pertains to parents picking up their children. The parent's "ticket" to get their child **MUST** be the matching number to the sticker on the child (always check the numbers, even if you know the parents). If the parent loses their stub, they must show photo ID to the Commonwealth Kids director on duty that morning, and the name on the ID must match the name that signed in the child on the sign-in sheet.

The Rule of 3

NEVER be alone with a child. Always maintain the rule of 3, which calls for groups of 3 or more in any situation. If you find yourself alone with a child, find others immediately in order to meet the rule of 3. Ideally, there should always be at least 2 adults with any group of kids. It is OK to be with a group of kids by yourself in the hallway or other public traffic places (such as taking a group to the bathroom). If you are assisting a non-potty trained child in a single bathroom, keep the door open.

Adult to Child Ratios

Using the Virginia State Code for Childcare Providers as a guideline, we have the following ratios for Commonwealth Kids (children:adults 18 and older) :

Infant Room – 4:1

Toddler Rooms – 7:1

Preschool Room – 10:1

Elementary Rooms – 10:1

If possible, we prefer having at least one adult more than the ratios call for.

The “Perimeter”

Always be aware of your “perimeter”. This is the area where kids must remain between drop off and pick up. They can only leave the secure area (such as for bathroom breaks) with an adult teacher. Make sure all exit doors are properly shut (yet still accessible) and that kids always stay in the secure area.

Bathroom Policy

Infants – change their diapers using gloves and baby wipes and toss dirty diapers and wipes in the diaper Genie; do not use diaper rash cream, even if it is in the baby’s diaper bag. Verbally communicate with the parents at pick up about diaper changes.

Toddlers – they are not fully potty trained, so assist them as necessary, keeping the door open (toddlers

have their own bathrooms in the toddler room)

PreK – they should be potty trained, so walk them down the hall and wait outside the bathroom as they go (if they call for assistance, help them out with the door is open)

Elementary – if you have a chance, encourage them to go to the bathroom before they enter your class (while they are still with their parents). If someone has an emergency and has to go, walk them down the hallway, check that the bathroom is empty first, then let the child go in while you wait outside the bathroom until they're done (making sure they washed their hands when they finished). **DO NOT** be in the bathroom with the elementary-aged children.

Reporting

In the event of an “incident” (any situation involving blood, scrapes, bruises, bumps, scars, burns, injuries, bites, fights, or physical harm), we want to properly communicate with leadership and parents. Here are some general guidelines:

- Crying: if you notice a child crying, try to find out why they are crying. From there, use your judgment in caring for the child and taking note of the seriousness of the crying so that you can either page the parent (if there is serious harm or uncontrollable crying) or wait until pick-up for a verbal explanation to the

parent. You do not have to report all crying to the parents, just times when it seems necessary to do so (ask yourself if you were the parent, would you want to know about what happened or not). In the most serious matters, inform the leadership staff and they will handle the matter.

- Physical Harm, Injury, and First-Aid: If there is physical and visible evidence of harm, respond accordingly with first-aid (gloves and kits are located in each classroom). In serious matters, get the director on duty. When you administer first-aid to a child (such as a band-aid), fill out a brief report (forms available in the rooms) and verbally communicate with the parent about what happened and what first aid was administered. At the end of the morning, give the form to the Commonwealth Kids leader/director of the day.

Sick Child Policy

As a teacher, use your judgment for obvious sick symptoms (constant coughing, mucous and snot all over the place, obvious discoloring in the face). Politely say that we cannot place the child in care this morning due to their condition. If the parent has a problem with that, get the director on duty.

Here is the policy in more detail, as already mentioned

earlier in the parent section:

- Sickness includes any fever (temp over 100 degrees F), diarrhea, thick green and yellow mucus from nose, rashes, vomiting, or any infection diagnosed by a doctor that has not been treated for at least 24 hours. Infections include chicken pox, rotavirus, skin or eye infections, etc..
- Children with open skin lesions or wounds will not be admitted unless they are suitably bandaged: any wounds occurring while child is in our care will be immediately bandaged by workers wearing gloves, and parents will be notified. Our classrooms are equipped with first aid kits.
- Children who exhibit a frequent tendency to bite will only be admitted if they are closely supervised by a parent until this pattern disappears.

Watching for Signs of Abuse

If you notice any odd bruises or marks anywhere on a child, ask them about it. If the child is too young to communicate, bring the bruises to the attention of the director on duty. If the child tells you anything about being hurt, hit, severely punished, or touched in an inappropriate manner by anyone (child or adult), take the matter extremely seriously and report it to the director on duty.

Note: Not all bruises and marks on children mean that

something bad happened. Some marks are natural marks (birthmarks, etc). Some scratches are self-inflicted by finger nails on a child's face (infants, for example). Use your best judgment in what marks to probe and ask the director on duty if you are in doubt about what is serious or not.

Arrival Time

Unless otherwise instructed to do so, arrive 30 minutes before the start time of the service.

Set Up and Tear Down

There are teams that bring materials in and out of each room, but you are responsible for placing the items in the bins and cleaning/sanitizing them before you put them in the bins. Also, empty out any diaper genies or trashcans in your room and also vacuum or sweep and empty the vacuum bag when you're done.

Paging a Parent

If you believe a parent needs to come for any reason, do not hesitate to text that child's number to the pager number posted in the room (214-6734). Some common reasons are: uncontrollable crying, any form of injury, severe behavior problems, etc.

Guidelines for Discipline

We strongly believe that a child's discipline is the responsibility of the parent(s).

However; when children are in our care, we will follow these guidelines:

- Use child's name to get their attention. Look them in the eye.
- Attempt to redirect inappropriate behavior.
- Immediately stop mistreatment of others using a firm but soft voice. Ex: "Don't hit or bite. Hitting hurts our friends."
- Use the "time-out" method (sitting quietly in a spot away from other children but still close enough for supervision and listening to/participating in the lesson). Explain inappropriate behavior to child. A good guideline is to give a child a time-out that is as many minutes as their age (maximum).
- Contact parents and the director on duty if mistreatment of others continues.

Sexual Abuse/Misconduct and "The Strike Zone"

We hate to talk about this, but this is a reality. One of our most important jobs in working with children is protecting them from any type of harm, and this includes sexual abuse. If you ever see any sexual misconduct or inappropriate touch between children or between an adult and a child, you are required by law to report the

matter. Report the incident to the the Commonwealth Kids leadership immediately. It is not our job to investigate the matter, but to report the known facts to the proper authorities.

We also follow “The Stike Zone” Rule in regards to touch. Do not touch any child anywhere between the upper chest and the knees (the strike zone). There is also no lap sitting and no full frontal hugs (use shoulder-to-shoulder hugs with kids). This protects the children primarily, but it also protects the adults from false accusations.

Exceptions to this touch rule include:

- Infants and toddlers (who need to be held and consoled in the teachers arms and also have diapers changed). Still, be aware to always treat the child with appropriateness and respect whenever you touch them. A good rule of thumb is to touch/hold the child as if their parent were standing there with you.
- Touching a child’s middle to upper back to pat them on the back or help guide them/move them from one spot to another.

Cleanliness

Wash hands often (especially after nose wipes and diaper changes), or use the anti-bacterial hand sanitizer. Use gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids, including

changing diapers, blood and vomit, etc.

Rotation Schedule Changes

The Directors of Children's Ministries make every effort to create a workable schedule for Commonwealth Kids teachers. You will receive a copy of the next months schedule via e-mail. Please make every effort to be present when you are scheduled to work. If you are unable to make your scheduled time, please find a replacement from our worker list for your position and notify Megan Huckabee (infant and toddler rooms) or Jesse Joyner (PreSchool through Elementary rooms) of any changes for that day. This will allow us to best serve the children and families at Commonwealth Chapel by assuring that we have workers for each service.

Youth Volunteers

We welcome any youth (ages 13-17) who wish to work in Commonwealth Kids, under the condition that they do so with their parent (who must be a screened teacher and present with their youth child while serving).

Contact info

We are always open to suggestions, concerns and questions. We value the involvement of each individual in our ministry. We could not function without your support!

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