



JACOB'S
WELL
CHURCH

GRACE POLICIES

Seeking to protect the vulnerable in the church

G.R.A.C.E

Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment

APPROVED BY JACOB'S WELL ELDERS

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AGE DEFINITIONS

Used throughout this
GRACE policy booklet

Child = Ages 0-5th grade

Student = 6th – 12th grade

Accountable Individual = Age 7 and up

Adult = Post high school

WHY DO WE HAVE GRACE POLICIES?

As Jacob's Well Church continues to grow we want to be proactive in protecting the children of this church, who are precious to God and also the most vulnerable members of our congregation.

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18: 1-6

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." James 1:27

It is clear from scripture that God cares about protecting children, and that they are susceptible to being so easily sinned against and hurt. At Jacob's Well, we desire to create a church culture that reflects God's heart in every way, including His good desire for children to be protected from harm as they flourish in a gospel-centered environment.

For this reason, we are committed to continuing to improve and refine our policies and processes in order to be as faithful as possible in protecting the children God has entrusted to us. *These policies and processes are not always convenient*, but they are important for God's glory and for the good of our community. This is truly a community wide endeavor that will require the commitment of each parent, volunteer and even child to faithfully participate in these community standards.

In the following pages, you will find a number of policies and procedures that are familiar and unchanged from years past, as well as some new modifications and additions. You will likely see a greater emphasis on explicit accountability measures, as well as more specificity on what is expected. We would ask you to please carefully read through this document in its entirety, and if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to Pastor Spencer Thomas (the Pastor of Care and Counseling) or Katie Horton (the Children's Ministry Director.) Our prayer is that the policies and procedures we implement will truly be a blessing and a safeguard to all the children in our church.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

There is universal agreement among experts that one of the most important and effective means to create a culture that protects children is to make sure everyone is aware of the community standards, and how to communicate when those standards have been broken.

With this in mind, we would ask that if you notice someone is not following the Jacob's Well GRACE policy, or even if you have a general hesitation or concern, to reach out to Pastor Spencer or Katie Horton to discuss your concerns. Please note that this is important to do even if you have confronted the individual because while Matthew 18 gives us great guidance on how to handle issues between fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we believe more accountability is required when issues arise with children because of their vulnerable nature.

If you have any questions about reporting or the policies in this booklet, please don't hesitate to reach out to Pastor Spencer to sit down and talk. (Spencer@jacobswellgb.org or by phone at 309-532-2364.)

When seeking to report a possible breach of community standards, you can either reach out to Pastor Spencer or fill out a form under the resources tab on our website.

Regardless of how you start the conversation, please know that a report form will always be filled out in order to document behavior and have as much accountability in the process as possible. Online reports filed will automatically be sent to Pastor Spencer as well as an associate pastor. Please note that anonymous reporting is available, but it is not actionable.

CHURCH WIDE

GRACE POLICY STANDARDS

1. No person will meet alone with the opposite gender unless another adult is present in the building. If there is no other adult present, they will need to move their meeting to a public space.
2. Show respect with touch by only giving touch that is welcomed by the other person and observable by others.
3. Show respect with words, avoiding those that shame, belittle, or sexualize.
4. Never be alone with a child or student in an isolated/non-public area unless you are the parent or guardian. This includes car rides.
 - a. Note: If you absolutely need to give a ride to a single child or student, another option is to put their parent/guardian on speakerphone during the duration of the car ride.
5. Only a family member or guardian (including any caregiver) may assist a child in the restroom. (If parents or guardians are unavailable, the Children's Ministry Policy guidelines will provide clarity on how to proceed: they can be found on pp 8.)
6. Cell phones should not be visible in bathrooms or during diapering.

SMALL GROUPS

GRACE POLICY STANDARDS

(Effective January of 2025)

1. No one-on-one situations between a child/student and an adult/qualified caregiver* (parents and guardians excluded).
2. If a small group is providing childcare, they must supply at least two qualified caregivers*.
3. Caregivers must be attentive to what is happening and not on their phone.
4. Children will play in open areas, not in spaces where there is low or no visibility.
5. If there is any diaper changing or children needing assistance in the restroom, the parents need to be summoned to do the task.
6. There should be no sexual language, jokes, videos, or other content.
7. All touch should be welcome by the child and observable by others.

**Qualified caregivers refer to all of the following:*

- 1. There needs to be 1 high school age person or older, and 1 fourth grade age person or older (or a parent)*
- 2. Anyone 18 years or older must have a completed background check by the church prior to care*
- 3. Both qualified caregivers need to be approved by all parents of children within the small group*

Note: Jacob's Well will contribute \$20 per group per session to help cover the cost of two qualified caregivers.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

GRACE POLICY STANDARDS

Safe Touch Policy

Jacob's Well Church requires that all touch between an adult and a child is **welcomed and observable** to other adults. Adults should understand and respect that children do not always welcome touch and they should pay attention to the child's body language.

General Safety

No one at Jacob's Well Church should be alone with a child who is not their own.

- This includes any church affiliated events, whether on or off church property (including giving rides).
- Regardless of gender, when a child is by themselves in a room, there must be at least two volunteers* in the room (excluding parents/guardians)

****Volunteers*** in Children's Ministry must be at least fourth grade, which qualifies them as an "accountable individual." Anyone 18 years or older must have a completed background check by the church prior to volunteering.

Bathroom/Diapering:

- If anyone enters a restroom and a child is present alone, please wait outside the restroom until the child comes out or until another “accountable individual” is present.
- A volunteer must take children to the restroom in groups of at least two children of the same gender and the volunteer must wait outside of the restroom.
 - Should an exceptional scenario arise where there is only one child, a volunteer must ensure that no other adults are in the restroom. Prop the door open. Be in line of sound but not sight. A volunteer should be able to hear the child but not see them. A volunteer can verbally instruct a child but not physically.
- Only family members or guardians are to physically assist a child in the restroom.
 - If a family member or guardian is not available, and a child is in need of assistance in the restroom, then there must be at least two adult volunteers present. The bathroom stall door must be opened at all times and a **female adult should assist while the other adult is observing with a clear line of sight to the child.** Afterwards, the parents must be notified of their child’s need for assistance.
 - If a family member or guardian is not available, and a child is in need of a diaper change, two adult volunteers must be present. **One female adult changing the diaper and the other adult observing with a clear line of sight to the child.** During pick-up, the parents must be notified that their child’s diaper was changed.

Prohibited Touching:

- Physically abusive or sexual touch
- Any touch that is unwanted by a child
- Any touch that is not observable by others
- Any intimate touch such as massage or any touch under clothing
- Touching a child's thighs, stomach, lower back, or private parts
- Tickling, piggy back rides, or other games involving lots of touch with children
- Lap sitting (exception: lap sitting is allowable with female caregivers for children 3 and under)
- Corporal Punishment (I.E. Physical)
- Playing with hair

Healthy Touching:

(includes but is not limited to)

- High-Fives, fist bumps, special handshakes
- Sitting side-by-side
- Side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder
- Kind words
- Carrying a small child on the side of your hip

Prohibited Language & Content:

- Sexually suggestive language or slang, racy jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
- Uploading, downloading, sharing or viewing of pornography or any sexualized images or media
- Music, video games, and movies with sexual themes

Healthy Language & Content:

(includes but is not limited to)

- positive verbal interactions
- Encouragement
- Kind words
- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes

Discipline/Correcting Children:

When the correction of a child is necessary, adults should avoid any form of harsh language including shaming or yelling and physically aggressive touch. This does not prohibit necessary physical intervention when appropriate [i.e. in the event of two children fighting]. Any serious misconduct by children should be brought to the attention of parents and church leadership.

YOUTH MINISTRY

GRACE POLICY STANDARDS

Youth Leader's meetings with students:

Leaders are encouraged to spend time with students outside of Youth Group, in public spaces* to minister to students in their daily lives and support parents as they raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In order to protect both leaders and students during any church affiliated events, whether on or off church property, we have created certain policies that all Youth Leaders agree to follow before they are approved as a youth leader.

1. In a public space:

- Leaders can meet with a student of the same gender, where they can be seen at all times (by foot traffic).
- Leaders can meet with a group of 3 or more students of the opposite gender.
- In extraordinary situations, the youth director can meet with a student of the opposite gender with written parental permission (via text or email).

2. In a private space:

- Leaders may not be alone with any student.
- Leaders may not meet alone with groups of students of the opposite gender without another adult present.
- Leaders may not drive a student alone.
- Leaders can drive students of the opposite gender with a group of 3 or more “accountable individuals” in the vehicle.

- Note: If an adult absolutely needs to give a ride to a single student, another option is to put their parent/guardian on speakerphone during the duration of the car ride.
3. **Leaders should minimize** phone calls, texting, or facetime and prioritize face to face public communication.
 4. **In all electronic communications with students all leaders will include a consistent 3rd party adult.**
(Often another leader or parent of the student)
 - Exception: Phone calls are allowed between students and leaders of the same gender

Note*

- **Public space** is defined as a location where there is reasonable opportunity for observation. This requires windows, open doors, or other significant means of visibility.
- **Private space** does not meet the requirements above.

Physical Touch between Leaders and Students

Safe Touch

Jacob's Well Church requires that all touch between individuals is **welcomed** and **observable** to other adults. Individuals should always understand and respect that people do not always welcome touch and they should pay attention to the person's body language.

Prohibited physical touch between leaders and students

- Physically abusive or sexual touch
- Any intimate touch such as massage, back rubs, petting, holding hands, any touch under clothing, or any lingering touch
- Touching a student's thighs, stomach, lower back, face or any private parts

Safe Touch Between Youth Students:

Jacob's Well Church requires that all touch on church property and at church functions between students is **welcomed** and **observable** to adults.

Prohibited physical touch between students:

- Physically abusive or sexual touch
- Any intimate touch such as massage, back rubs, petting, any touch under clothing
- Touching another student's thighs, stomach, lower back, face or any private parts

Prohibited Language:

- Sexually suggestive language or slang, racy jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits

Allowable Sexual Discussions:

- Jacob's Well recognizes that talking about sex is important in the context of teaching about healthy God honoring sexual relationships, but all language should be redemptive in nature and not explicit without approval from elders.
- Purity Night contains more explicit language in its teaching which is reviewed and approved by a Pastor, and then given to parents to be reviewed beforehand
- Jacob's Well also requires that any leader who is keeping a student accountable regularly must report regularly to the overseeing Pastor about what is discussed.

Positive Examples could include:

- Helping students who are dating create physical boundaries/keeping students accountable to physical boundaries
- Helping a student (of the same gender) seek sexual purity if they have sexual sin struggles

Prohibited behavior includes:

- Uploading, downloading, sharing or viewing of pornography or any sexualized images or media
- Music, video games, and movies with sexual themes

COUNSELING MINISTRY

GRACE POLICY STANDARDS

The counseling center is respectful and supportive of the community standards that are in place for the other areas of the church. The counseling center seeks to submit to and honor God's law first and foremost. In addition, our licensed professional counselors are also bound by the ethical and legal standards of the licensing board and other credentialing agencies. Therefore, we have additional internal and external boundaries around safe and appropriate communication.

The counseling center is an environment that is specifically designed for connection and healing to happen, which most often takes place in one-on-one meetings with a counselor. In order to maintain accountability in this environment, these are the boundaries that will be upheld:

1. If a licensed professional counselor is meeting with an individual client of the opposite gender, there must be another counselor or staff member present in or near the counseling center at the time of the meeting. The other staff member must be made aware that the meeting is happening. In addition, the client will also be made aware of this policy and that there is someone on the same floor.

2. Minors receiving counseling must have a parent/guardian present in the basement through the duration of their meeting. Minors who can drive themselves to and from their appointment may be exempted from this rule, in which case, refer to #1. A guardian or babysitter who is at least 16 years old can remain in the building for the duration of the session in lieu of a parent. If this is not possible, the parent or guardian must communicate this with the counselor prior to the session to determine an appropriate arrangement.

3. No meetings are to be held in these spaces without permission from the Pastor of Care and Counseling.

In addition, a culture of safety will be promoted in the counseling center, in which the client is encouraged to openly communicate about their experience of safety throughout their counseling sessions to pastor Spencer or one of the other pastors. Clients will be given explicit directions in their intake documents how to make any safety concerns or complaints known.

4. Children may wait in the counseling center waiting room unattended only if they are 9 years of age or older. They must remain in the waiting room at all times unless they need to use the restroom and are expected to behave appropriately. If a child is found to be misbehaving, this privilege may be revoked at the discretion of the counseling center staff. All children waiting in the counseling center are required to have a way to contact their parents or guardian. If the child does not have access to a phone or other communication device, a walkie-talkie will be provided for the duration of the session to ensure reliable communication.