

Safety & Behavior Policies for Children & Youth

- [Behavior Policies for Children and Youth in Foothills Programs](#)
- [Covenants](#)
- [Consequences](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [Check-in & Check-out Procedures for Children & Youth](#)
- [Movies/ Electronic Media](#)
- [General Safety/Medical Policies](#)

Behavior Policies for Children and Youth in Foothills Programs

Every person has inherent worth and dignity regardless of age, so we expect teachers, students and parents to honor each other by listening with respect; by treating each other with kindness and compassion; by providing an environment that is physically and emotionally safe.

The following are prohibited during all Foothills Unitarian Church sanctioned activities where children or youth are present.

- a. Sexualized behavior of any kind.
- b. Possession and/or use of drugs and alcohol.
- c. All forms of violence (physical, verbal, sexual, and otherwise).
- d. Weapons

Our goal is to aid in the development of each student to the student's fullest potential. The following policies are specific to children and youth in Foothills Programs.

- a. Participants in programs for children and youth agree and respect group behavior covenants that insist on kind, inclusive and non-violent behavior.
- b. Individual bodily autonomy and identities are respected in our programs.
- c. Disparaging comments or actions will not be accepted. Students are encouraged to recognize and resist stereotypes and biases and to challenge prejudice.
- d. During Foothills programs for Children & Youth, students must ask, and receive permission by an adult FM staff person or volunteer before leaving the classroom or meeting space. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult volunteer if they leave a program space.

Covenants

With basic guidelines provided by the Family Ministry Staff, each adult volunteer team, in collaboration with their students, will create a class covenant which includes standards of acceptable behavior in the classroom. Any student who goes outside these standards will be given two verbal reminders. These reminders will be given in a way that does not embarrass or humiliate the student and, when possible, will not be given in front of other students or adults.

Consequences

Any child/youth who continues to behave in an unsafe or destructive manner will be offered one of the following options as the leader or RE Staff member feels is appropriate:

- a. The child/youth will be asked to take a brief “time apart” in a corner of the classroom. In a few minutes the teacher will invite the child to rejoin the group with acceptable behavior.
- b. The leader may contact the Family Ministry staff to request that the child or youth help elsewhere in the program for the remainder of the session.
- c. The student will be asked to leave the classroom and join his/her parents in the Sanctuary. An adult will escort the child to the sanctuary to assure their safety.
- d. If a student’s behavior results in injury to another person or damage to property, the student will be asked to make restitution appropriate to the severity of the behavior and the age of the student. The child’s parents and the DRE will be included in this decision

Confidentiality

Adult Leaders and Youth Advisors may come in contact with information of a confidential nature during check-ins or classes/meetings. A child/youth's confidentiality should be respected, except under the following circumstances:

- a. If a child is doing harm to themselves.
- b. If a child is doing harm to another.
- c. If someone else is doing harm to a child.

Under these circumstances, the parent/guardian of the child/youth, or the Director of Family Ministry or one of our Ministers should be informed. The safety of the child/youth must be the primary driver. If a volunteer is uncertain as to whether or not information should be shared, she/he can speak to the Director of Family Ministry or Minister, who will maintain confidentiality if it is determined that confidentiality should not be breached. When in doubt, the Religious Professionals (Director of Family Ministry and Minister(s) who are designated mandatory reporters will make the final decision on whether or not information should remain confidential.

Check-in & Check-out Procedures for Children & Youth

Check-in for Children's Small Groups begins at 20 minutes prior to each church service.

We ask parents to check their child in to their small group in the Family Ministry Hallway at the beginning of each church service using the tablets provided. The system prints a nametag label for each child with their parents phone number and a large unique number. The system also prints a nametag for the parent with a matching number. Youth in Middle and High School may check themselves into their small groups without the assistance of a parent.

Parents are asked to Check-out their children with 10 minutes after the church service ends. Parents will check their child out from their classroom or on the playground with the Adult Volunteer or Foothills Staff person on duty by showing their nametag with the number that matches their child's nametag and signing them out on the class list. Children not picked up within 15 minutes after the service will be transferred to the supervision of the Family Ministry staff on the playground or taken to find their parents by a staff member.

Youth in middle and high school Youth Groups can leave their Small Groups without being checked out by a parent.

Movies/ Electronic Media

1. When using movies and electronic media for children's groups and youth groups, the selection of an appropriate movie should be made that is mindful of the age and experience diversity within the classroom/group, and is respectful and inclusive to all. The DFM, or FMC and parents will be informed of any movies that will be shown in advance of the showing.
2. For all groups, efforts should be taken to choose movies that do not promote or glamorize disrespectful relationships or behavior; unsafe sex, or casual sex without commitment; senseless, disturbing and /or glamorized violence; or the use of illegal substances or unhealthy lifestyles.
3. High School Youth Group and OWL Programs will be required to seek permission from the DFM before showing an R-rated movie. Efforts first are made to acquire a suitable movie with a lower rating to ensure inclusion of all youth.
4. No child or youth will be required to view a chosen film. Parents will be required to sign a permission form for R-rated movies.
5. Staff and adult volunteers must observe appropriate boundaries of behavior, adhering to the Code of Ethics (attached # 2) when communicating with youth and children via electronic media.

General Safety/Medical Policies

a. Policies for Adults Working with Children & Youth - All Adults working with children & youth must be a minimum of 18 years old, have been attending Foothills for a minimum of one year, and undergo a background screen through Foothills Unitarian Church contracted screening service. A youth age 15 or older may serve as a classroom assistant in a group for children if working in partnership with an adult. Adults working with middle and high school youth must be a minimum of 25 years old. All groups for children must have a minimum of two adult leaders present for every session. If only one leader is available a Foothills staff person will assist the group or the group will combine with another group to meet the two adult minimum.

b. Welcoming Children/Youth with Special Needs - A primary goal of our Family Ministry program is to welcome every child/youth and family to our church. Our church campus is wheelchair accessible and we work with parents of children with special needs to help make their church experience positive. The Family Ministry staff will consult parents and volunteer leaders to develop a plan for supporting children, including adjusting the classroom environment, or modifying content. We will enlist additional support staff for children with with unique needs if required.

c. Medical Conditions - We ask that parents whose children are on specific medications or have special medical conditions alert the Family Ministry staff as they see fit. Medical conditions will be communicated to leaders in a confidential manner.

d. Illness - Please do not bring children to church with fever, flu or communicable illness such as Covid 19, chicken pox, conjunctivitis, etc.

e. Medical Emergencies - In the event of an accidental or medical emergency, teachers will immediately contact the child's parents and the DFM and/or FMC, and summon medical help if necessary.

a. Food Safety - a light snack may be provided during programs for Children & Youth. Parents will inform the Family Ministry Staff of any food allergies or special dietary needs that a child/youth has when they first attend. Severe food allergies will be posted on their class roster. If your child has food allergies that prohibit them from eating the snack provided, we ask parents to provide an appropriate snack.