

Putting Up Fences: Personnel Policies and Procedures

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A wise gardener knows how to protect the garden he has worked so hard to create. Knowing the threats to your garden ahead of time will give you an advantage when those threats do come.



We take precautions for many things these days. We give our children cell phones "just in case." We teach our preschoolers how to recognize "bad people," and how to get help if needed. We install smoke detectors in just about every room of our houses. Fast food companies print warnings on cups of coffee to try to prevent any lawsuits from people who are burned from spills. We even discourage our youth from helping others along the freeway because of the risk of being hurt by those who may pretend to be "in trouble." This world is not getting safer. It is becoming more and more complex, and dangerous.

Today, when we think about "child safety," we must think about protecting our children's ministry (CM) from lawsuits. The CM could be damaged by a lawsuit. If the CM is damaged, hundreds of children, and even the whole church, could be negatively affected.

The "enemy" comes to your ministry garden in many forms. He could take the form of poor planning, disorganization, faulty procedures, lack of training, errors in recruiting or in screening team members, poor supervision of children, or poor supervision of team members. It is against these threats that we must erect fences around our ministry garden.

The Value and Function of Policies

I like to compare safety policies to the "fire blocks" in your walls. Behind the drywall on your walls are vertical wood boards stretching from the floor to the ceiling. These are called "studs." Between the studs are horizontal wood boards. These boards are called "fire blocks." These fire blocks are critical pieces of equipment that are designed for a specific purpose. Their placement in the walls is governed by the local building codes. They are designed to slow down the fire in the wall if the house is on fire.

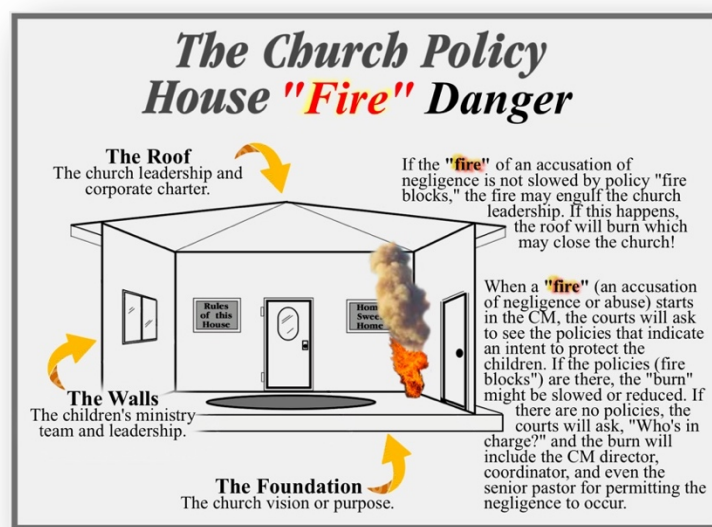


Fires generally begin low, near the floor. They begin with a cigarette tossed in a trash can, or a spark at an outlet. As the fire burns up the wall, it burns up alongside the studs inside the wall. If there's nothing stopping the flames, they go right up to the ceiling and on to the roof. Any firefighter will tell you that once the roof is on fire, the structure is doomed. If we can slow the fire's travel up the wall, firefighters have more time to save the building. Fire blocks are placed between the studs to slow the fire down. The flames stop at the fire blocks and must burn through the block before they resume their travel up the studs toward the roof. The local building department determines how long the wall should be permitted to burn. The more fire blocks placed in the wall, the longer the wall will burn before the roof catches fire. **Your ministry policies are designed to slow the "fire" of a lawsuit as it burns "up" the church administrative structure.**



If you think of a "fire" as an accusation of neglect or abuse, the wall as being your church staff, and the roof as being your senior pastor or church corporate charter, this analogy will make sense. Most "fires" (legal problems, accusations, etc.) start "low" on the church wall: **in the children's area**. Fewer lawsuits have been filed related to the youth or adult ministries compared with those related to the children's area. If someone accuses one of your team members of touching a child inappropriately, the "fire" that is started by that lawsuit can climb up the wall quickly. The courts will ask questions about supervision and policies. If you have no "fire blocks" (policies to protect children) in the wall, the "fire" can burn up to you, the children's pastor, and on to the senior pastor or church charter. Churches have been shut down because of lawsuits that began as a "fire" in the children's ministry. A policy can act as a fire block. It can slow the fire down as it burns up the corporate wall.

A policy slows the fire down by providing tangible proof of your **intent to protect the children**. Here's an example. One of your three-year-olds goes home and says something about one of your team members touching her that concerns her parents. The parents jump to conclusions and file a lawsuit against your church for sexual abuse. The "fire" begins to burn up the wall. During the ensuing investigations, the court discovers that your policy manual states, "At no time will any adult be alone with children." Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the teacher of the three-year-olds was alone in the room with the children because of some last-minute cancellations by other team members (does this sound familiar?). You were working on the problem, but this "incident" happened before you could get another adult shifted over to the three-year-old classroom. The judge may be forgiving or lenient with you because of your "never alone" policy! If the child's story or the parent's accusation is not substantiated, the fact that you had a policy that was designed to protect the children is a definite "fire block" in your corporate wall! Without that policy, you and your entire administrative wall might be judged as negligent, or supportive of the alleged abuse! A policy expresses your intent to protect the children, and thereby can protect you from harm even if you fail to abide by the policy temporarily.



How To Write Policies

Writing policies is not that difficult. The hardest part of writing policies is clarifying what you want, or don't want, to happen. Then, after you've defined your boundaries, you can write some basic policies. Don't worry about the words at this point. Your feelings, views, and opinions of what needs to happen, or not happen, is the most important thing at this point. You will get help from elders or an attorney for the final crafting of the legal words later. Here are some basic questions to ask as you begin writing policies

Basic Policy Questions

- **What is your "enemy"?** - What do you want to prevent from happening?
- **Where is the earliest point of contact?** - Where can you install prevention?
- **What process is needed?** - To prevent the problem, what needs to be done?
- **What happens if the problem occurs?** - What is the process to deal with the problem?
- **What happens afterward?** - What forms of communication, reporting, or follow-up are needed?
- **What legal boundaries are present?** - What laws pertain to this area?

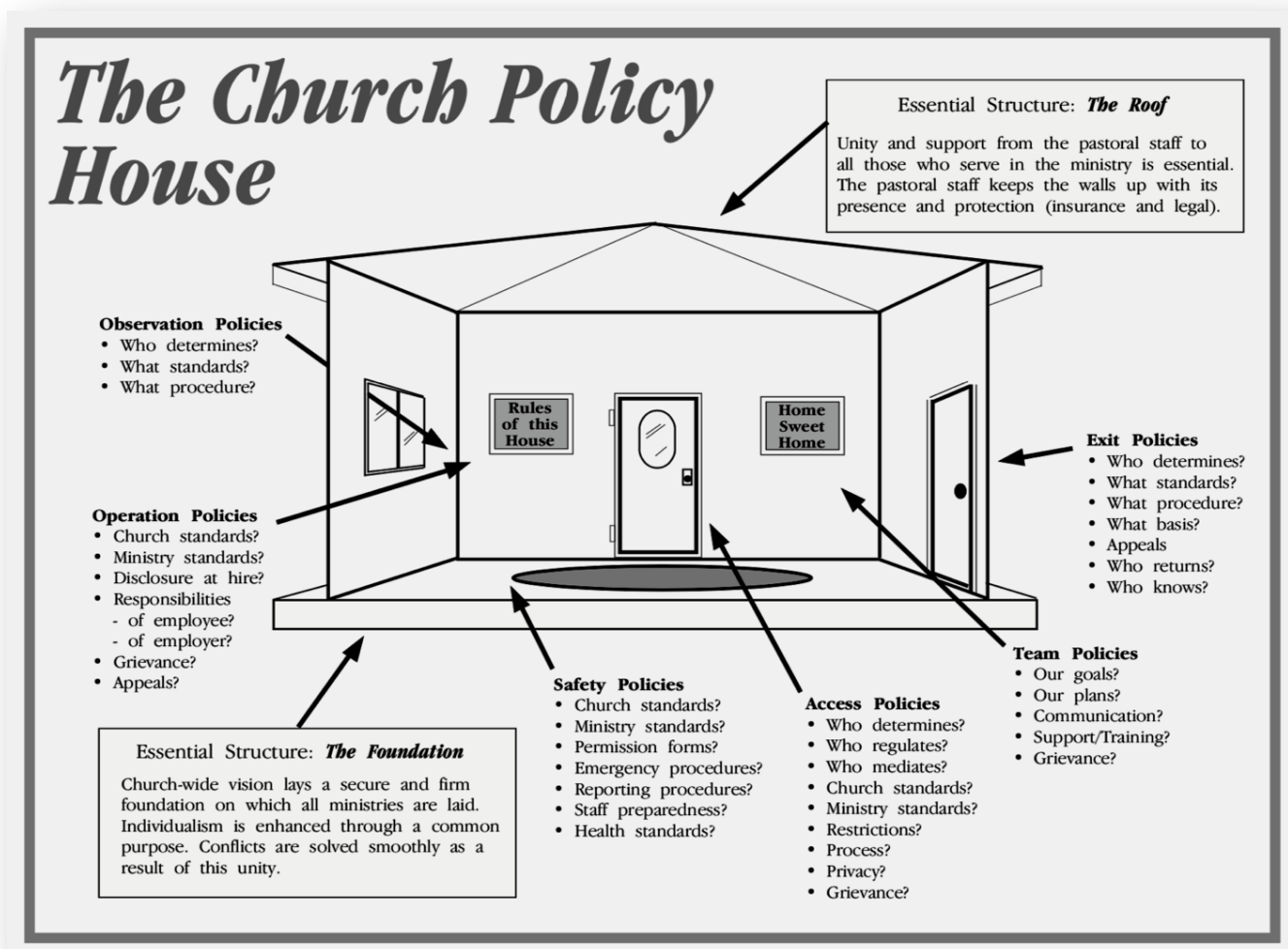
Keep in mind that a policy is a "fluid" document. You must start somewhere, but the words or processes you put into place in the beginning need to grow and improve as you become more experienced, and as the society and the ministry grow.

Know Where To Place Your Policies

Obviously, you can write policies for everything! You can be so afraid of being sued that you even have a policy for behavior at a drinking fountain! Have you ever been involved with people or companies that have a policy for everything? It's terrible. That level of paranoia drives people away. Jesus knew that we would be involved with people who would misunderstand and judge us. He told His disciples:

*"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.
Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves."
Matthew 10:16*

When He said to be shrewd while, at the same time, being innocent, He meant that we are to be careful, watchful, and have pure motives. I believe there are critical areas for which to create policies, and the rest must be given to the Lord. We need to be wise without being paranoid. Here is a picture that might help you know where to place your children's ministry policies.



This document is focused on policies regarding personnel only. Policies concerning personnel issues comprise the largest block of policies in ministry. For the sake of focus, policies about child sickness, or other non-personnel policies are dealt with in the "Building The Trellis" document. Separating the policies this way is like trying to pull apart a peanut butter and jelly sandwich after it has already been put together. The team members and their actions affect everything in your children's ministry. Here are nine categories into which all personnel policies will rest.

Nine Categories of Personnel Policies

1. **Recruitment**
What kind of person is recruited to the CM team?
2. **Screening**
What is the team member screening process?
3. **Training**
How are the team members prepared to be with children?
4. **Supervision**
Who supervises the team members while with the children?
5. **Access**
How is access to the children protected and restricted?
6. **Removal From Ministry**
How is a person removed from the team, and why?
7. **Reinstatement To Ministry**
Can a removed team member return to the team, how?
8. **Touching**
What is appropriate touching of a child?
9. **Discipline**
What is correct and incorrect discipline?

The Five Step Policy Creation Process

Here is a five-step process in writing your own personnel policies. At the fourth step, you will be given an example of a policy dealing with that category. In the "template," I have written in a "General Belief Statement." There is nothing "holy" about these words. They are simply a starting point for your own thoughts. Feel free to change those statements to reflect your own church's views.

Five-steps to Writing a Policy

1. **Define** the policy.
2. Understand the **rationale** for the policy.
3. **Evaluate** your current policy.
4. **Consult** sample policies from other churches.
5. Work through the "Policy Template" as you tailor the necessary **components** of each policy to your own church.

Category 1: The "Recruitment Policy"

Definition

A policy for governing the recruiting of people to the CM team.

Rationale

To recruit the people with the character, spirit, and other qualities that match the ministry vision is much easier than dealing with their differences after they are already on the team.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **recruiting** process protect your team and children from those who would be harmful to the team or to the children? Is it clear that you are seeking a certain kind of person with a certain "heart attitude," or spiritual character?

Sample "Recruitment Policy"

It is the policy of our children's ministry to recruit "...those whose hearts are totally His." (II Chron. 16: 9) We will look for adults who have **attended our church for at least six months**, and whose **relationship with God is growing** as evidenced by the responses given on the Children's Ministry Application and the personal references submitted. The people who are invited to serve on the children's ministry team must have been a **Christian for longer than one year**. We will place new team members into areas of service based on the results of the Personality Inventory.

The "Recruitment Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:



We believe that those who serve in the children's ministry must be committed Christians whose personal relationship with Jesus Christ is growing and intimate. The fruit of that relationship must be visible in the form of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We believe people are most effective if they are placed in service areas which match their personality, and gifts.

1. How long should a person be a Christian before serving in the CM?
2. Is membership in your church required for those who wish to serve in the CM?
3. Do you require at least six months of fellowship at your church* prior to applying?
4. Is there a certain age limit for those who wish to serve in the CM?
5. Are there any other conditions that pertain to those who wish to serve in the CM?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy that all who consider applying to serve in the children's ministry must be those who.... (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

If a person wishes to serve in the children's ministry, but does not satisfy the above requirements, we have this plan available to him or her: (Instead of just saying, "Sorry," what options can you offer? Be careful here, don't compromise your conditions!)

* The "**Six Months Rule**" is advised by nearly all who deal with the process of screening CM team members. A child abuser is less apt to wait for six months to gain access to your children!

Category 2: The "Screening Policy"

Definition

The process through which all CM team applicants must pass.

Rationale

The screening process is designed to be a "front door" for all applicants. It will be a deterrent to child abusers or others who may not fit the ministry vision.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **screening** process protect your children from those who would be harmful to the children? Does the process contain multiple steps, or layers, through which all who wish to join the CM team must pass?



Sample "Screening Policy"

All who serve in our children's ministry will pass through our application process which includes:

1. The CM application form (including four personal references and one from a church member)
2. Six months attendance or membership at this church
3. Attend the "Children's Ministry Introduction" class
4. Background check with law enforcement agency
5. Signing the Agreement To Serve

If the applicant refuses to complete any of the components of the application process, the application will be denied and access to children, on the part of the applicant, will not be permitted.

If the information received during the application process is deemed questionable by those who review the results, the application will be denied, and access to children will not be permitted. The senior associate pastor, or senior pastor may be consulted by the children's pastor for counsel regarding an application.

We will accept applications from people who are 16 years old and older. People younger than 18 will be considered "teens," and must be teamed with adults in service. Teens 12 to 15 years old, who wish to serve in the CM, must enter the CM team through the youth-in-ministry process within the youth ministry.

The "Screening Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe that protecting the safety of children is our highest responsibility (equal to their spiritual development). We believe we must protect the trust the parents give us to nurture their children while not permitting any harm to come to them. We believe that those adults who serve in the children's ministry have a significant potential to do good or harm in the children's lives. We will do all we can to screen out those who may desire to do harm.

1. Do you require an application for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?
2. Do you require personal references for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?
3. Do you support the "six months rule"* for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?
4. Do you require background checks for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?
5. Do you require that fingerprints be checked for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?

6. Do you require that those who serve in the children's ministry sign an "Agreement To Serve" clarifying their responsibilities and your expectations?
7. Do you require that those who serve in the children's ministry sign a statement that they have read, and agree with, your ministry policies?
8. Do you require an apprenticeship period, which is a supervised probationary period as well as a training period, for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?
9. Are there any other steps in the screening process that your church will require for those who wish to serve in the children's ministry?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy that all who apply to serve in the children's ministry must pass through the following screening process: (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

Category 3: The "Training Policy"

Definition

The process by which team members are prepared and equipped to fulfill the ministry vision.

Rationale

People are attracted to those areas for which they feel qualified and supported. We will recruit people with good hearts, and then give them the tools they need to succeed. This policy states our plans and resolve to do so.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **training** process provide those who volunteer with enough support and guidance to guarantee that they will be secure and successful?



Sample "Training Policy"

All who serve in our children's ministry will be required to receive training appropriate for their area of service. We will provide the following training:

1. Age-group characteristics of children
2. Discipline of children
3. Classroom management
4. Lesson presentation
5. Use of curriculum
6. Emergency procedures and reporting
7. Child abuse recognition, prevention, reporting
8. Cleanliness and disease control
9. Parent relations

Opportunities will be made available for CPR training and basic first aid via outside agencies.

Training will be accomplished through two required meetings and then a mandatory 4-week apprenticeship. The apprenticeship will be served under a mentor for the specific area of service.

If, during the apprenticeship, the mentor's concerns are severe enough to question the trainee's suitability for CM service, the mentor will contact the coordinator who will contact the children's pastor. The children's pastor will consult with the trainee, the coordinator, and the mentor to determine the possibility of service. The senior associate pastor, senior pastor, or the CM elder designate may be consulted at the discretion of the children's pastor.

The "Training Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe that people are more successful when they feel equipped to do the task, and connected to others on the team. We also believe that "on the job" training is the best way to learn.

1. What role does the apprenticeship period play in the screening process?
2. Who supervises the apprenticeship process?
3. Who will be the apprenticeship mentors?
4. How long will the apprenticeships be?
5. What determines if the apprenticeship is successfully completed?
6. What happens if the new team member "fails" the apprenticeship?
7. Can a "failed" apprenticeship be repeated?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy that all newly accepted team members will serve an apprenticeship. This apprenticeship will include: (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

Category 4: The "Supervision Policy"

Definition

A policy regarding the supervision of CM team members while children are present.

Rationale

This policy identifies the "chain of command" for the CM as well as guidelines for adults interacting with children. It is designed to protect the children, team members, administration, and church from accusations of negligence or abuse.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **supervision** of team members while they are with the children protect the children, you, and the church from any accusations of negligence?



Sample "Supervision Policy" (the "Never Alone Rule")

At no time, will anyone who serves in the CM be alone with children. All who serve in the CM will serve as part of a team of at least two adults. It is our desire, whenever possible, to create teams of three or more. The addition of an approved youth assistant to a classroom does not equal the addition of an adult. One adult with one approved youth assistant is still considered to be an adult "alone" with the children. This situation must be corrected. Married couples will be permitted to serve together **only when they are joined by a third adult**.

"Approved" adult/child ratios for CM classes and events will change with each setting. In addition to the **"Never Alone Rule"** stated above, the CM will work toward the following adult/child ratios:

Nursery - 3/1
Toddlers - 4/1
Preschool - 7/1
Elementary - 10/1

If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a team of at least two adults cannot be guaranteed for a CM event or program, the coordinator or supervisor for that event will decide which of the following options are best for the situation, and then act on that situation. The options are:

1. Join the children in two classes or areas to guarantee a team of two or more adults. *
2. "Borrow" adults from the teams in other classes or areas. *
3. Do not accept children for this class or area until at least two adults can be recruited. *

* All of these "options," by their nature, may not be the best choice for either the church or the children. If options 1 or 2 above cannot be done without raising the adult/child ratios beyond our "approved" limits, then the only option is to close the class. Considerations must also be given to the maximum occupancy of the room being used. Child safety and church liability must take priority over convenience or programming.

The "Supervision Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe in the value of a team. A team, "two or more," serving together is good for the children, the ministry, and the team members themselves. A team also protects the children's ministry and the church from false accusations about team member behavior.

1. What do you believe about adults being alone with children?
2. What should be done if a "lone adult" situation arises?
3. Who is responsible for the supervision of team members while in service?
4. What happens if a team member is doing something "wrong"?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy that every team member be supervised while in the presence of children. This supervision will: (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

Category 5: The "Access Policy"

Definition

A policy to restrict access to children while they are in the CM.

Rationale

Parents entrust their precious, priceless children into our care, believing that we will do all we can to protect the children from any form of harm. Today's world has many people who would like to harm children. This policy restricts access to the children to only those who have been "approved" by the CM screening, and application process.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **access** to the children while in your care, protect the children from "bad" people who might want to harm them? Does the policy protect you, and the church from accusations of negligence?



Sample "Access Policy"

No adult will ever be permitted to be with the children except those displaying the CM photo ID badge and lanyard. Those parents who wish to experience the CM with their children will be given "guest" badges which will be turned in after the service. Team members who lose their ID badges will be permitted to serve with a "guest" badge until theirs is replaced. All intruders, without approved photo ID badges will be viewed as potentially dangerous and will be dealt with seriously by the children's pastor or other CM or church administrators.

The "Access Policy" Template

General Belief Statement: *We believe that it is our responsibility to restrict access to the children while they are under our care. We will accomplish this at all costs in support of the parents' trust. Only those who have been "cleared" through our children's ministry screening process will be granted access to the children.*

1. How will you identify CM team members who have been "cleared" to be with the children?
2. Will others ever be permitted to visit or observe?
3. Under what conditions will non-team members be permitted to visit or observe the CM?
4. Who monitors the access to the CM?
5. Do you restrict access to the CM facility areas?
6. What happens if a "cleared" team member isn't properly identified (see #1 above)?
7. What is the process for dealing with an "intruder" who is not cleared for access?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy that no one will have access to the children except those who have been "cleared" through the CM screening process. Access to the children will be restricted by: *(now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).*

Category 6: The "Removal From Ministry Policy"

Definition

This policy will define the process for removing team members from service.

Rationale

Just as it is critical to determine the process for recruiting and adding people to your ministry team, it is also critical to create a policy for removing them, if needed. In this policy, the rights of the individual in question are balanced against the protection of the children and the team. This policy dictates a process of communication, evaluation, cautions, and rights to appeal. Those who are not supportive of your ministry vision, or who may harm children must be removed, but we must do so carefully and in harmony with state and local laws.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **removal from ministry** of CM team members who may be harmful to the children, your team, or the church clearly state the process required? Does the process protect the children from any harm? Does the process protect you, the CM, and the church from any accusations of "wrongful dismissal"?



Sample "Removal From Ministry Policy"

It is the desire of the CM that all who serve in the CM be dedicated to that service, and that they take seriously the commitment and related responsibility. We will do all we can to support and equip each team member in the hopes that this will produce a deepening sense of personal dedication. If, however, the children's pastor, or the department coordinator have reason to question a team member's commitment, the following steps will be taken to determine the status of the team member's service:

1. The children's pastor and department coordinator will consult together regarding the team member's "observed" behavior.
2. If the team member's commitment is questionable, the department coordinator will discuss their observations with the team member. The team member will be given an opportunity to explain his or her actions. The department coordinator will reinforce the value of commitment and the correct procedures or policies as well as encouraging the team member. The conversation will be documented on the Children's Ministry Team Member Review Report. A copy of the report will be mailed to the team member and kept on file in the children's ministry office. All personnel reports and forms are considered confidential, and are available to only the children's pastor, and the coordinator for that specific area. The information may be available to others only at the request of the senior pastor, or senior associate pastor.

** If the team member's actions are determined to be physically, emotionally, or spiritually harmful to the children, the team member's service will be immediately terminated. Possible steps for reinstatement will be considered based on the CM "Reinstatement To Ministry" policies.
3. If the team member's actions or signs of commitment do not change because of the meeting with the coordinator, the children's pastor will join with the department coordinator in the next meeting with the team member. At this meeting, the team member will be placed on "probation" for a period of 3 months. It will be explained to the team member that if his or her signs of lack of commitment don't improve during this probationary period, he or she will be removed from the CM for a period of 1 year. The conversation will be documented on the Children's Ministry

Team Member Review Report. A copy of the report will be mailed to the team member and kept on file in the children's ministry office. If the team member wishes to challenge or change the information recorded on the report, he or she must do so in writing within 48 hours. No changes will be made after 48 hours. Copies of this report and any previous reports related to this team member will now be sent to the senior associate pastor.

5. If, after* 3 months of probationary service, the team member's actions fail to indicate an increase in commitment in the area specifically mentioned in the 2 previous meetings and reports, it will be determined that he / she is unable or unwilling to change. Provisions will be made for replacing him / her immediately. The team member will be removed from service for 1 year. At the end of that 1-year period, the team member may apply for reinstatement based on the policies and procedures for "Reinstatement To Ministry."



*If, during the probationary period, the team member's actions constitute a direct threat to the unity or health of the entire CM team, the children's pastor, together with the senior associate pastor, and the designated elder, may decide to discontinue the probationary period before its completion and remove the team member from service immediately.

5. If, at any time during this process, the team member wishes to appeal the decisions being made on his / her behalf, he / she may request an audience with an elder designated for the CM. A copy of the Appeals Policy and Process form will be given the team member in preparation for the meeting. Prior to the appeals meeting with the elder designate being scheduled, the team member must sign the statement at the bottom of the Appeals Policy and Process page(s) stating that he or she has read the policy and agrees to abide by the process. No appeals proceedings will continue without this statement being signed. If the team member refuses to agree to the appeals process, he or she waives his or her right to such an appeal.
6. If a CM team member is accused of child abuse or neglect, he / she will be removed from service immediately while his / her situation is considered by the designated elder or the legal system. (If the designated elder so desires, the entire elder board may be included in this process.) If a team member's past arrests or convictions for child abuse or neglect are uncovered after he / she begins serving in the CM, he / she will be removed from service immediately while his or her situation is considered by the designated elder or elders. His / her return to service will be governed by the "Reinstatement To Ministry" policies and procedures.

The "Removal From Ministry Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe that only those adults who benefit the children with their presence should serve in the children's ministry. If at any time, a team member becomes, in our judgement, a threat to the children or others on the team, that person's involvement in the CM may be at risk.

1. How do you define "being a threat" to the children?
2. How do you define "being a threat" to the other team members?
3. Who decides when a team member is a "threat" to the children or other team members?
4. Who confronts the team member with the concern regarding the "threat"?
5. Do you believe the person should be given a chance to correct the threatening behavior?
6. How much time should the threatening team member be given to correct the behavior?

7. Does the supervision of that team member change during the "probation" period?
8. What documentation is made of the confrontation and probation of the team member?
9. Does the team member sign the documentation, and receive copies?
10. Where is the documentation kept?
11. Who has access to the documentation?
12. How is the team member's right of confidentiality protected?
13. What happens to the documentation if the problem is corrected?
14. What happens if the problem is not corrected?
15. What is the process for removing a team member from service?
16. What are the legal standards for removing a team member from service?
17. Are there any threats for which the team member is removed instantly, with no "probation"?
18. Is there an appeal process available to the team member?
19. What communication is required with the senior pastor or other church administrators, and when should that communication take place?
20. If parent(s) are involved, what can, or can't you tell them about the process?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy to protect the safety of the children and integrity of the children's ministry at all costs. If a member of the children's ministry team should ever, in our judgement, pose a "threat" to the children or the children's ministry team, that threat will be dealt with through the following process: (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

Category 7: The "Reinstatement To Ministry Policy"

Definition

This policy will define the process by which a removed CM team member may be reinstated to service.

Rationale

Once a CM team member is removed from service, he / she may be reinstated if the church or CM administration deem him / her "fit" for service. This policy clarifies the process by which that reinstatement may occur. It also identifies any conditions for which reinstatement is not possible. At all times, the protection of the children, and the unity of the CM team must be the primary focus.

Evaluation

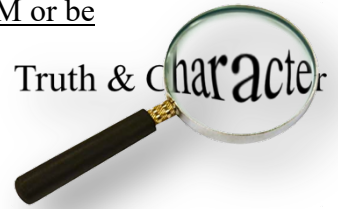
Does your policy regarding the **reinstatement to ministry** of children's ministry team members who have been removed from service clearly state the process necessary to protect the children from any harm? Does the process guarantee that the reason for the removal is now not present? Does the process guarantee that the reinstated person will be closely supervised? Does the process protect you, the CM, and the church from any accusations of negligence?



Sample "Reinstatement To Ministry Policy"

When faced with the choice between a team member's "feelings," or "reputation" and the safety of the children, the CM will always act in favor of the children's safety. When a team member is removed from service, he / she may be reinstated based on the following policies and procedures:

1. No one who is convicted of child abuse or neglect may ever serve in the CM or be permitted to have contact with any children in any church event.
2. Anyone who has been FALSELY accused or arrested for child abuse or neglect may apply to be reinstated to service only after the following conditions are met:
 - a. All charges are dropped, and the team member's record is "cleared" by the police department or prosecuting agency.
 - b. A completed Request For Reinstatement form with attached personal statement of growth and commitment from the team member to the designated elder the church
 - c. A meeting between the team member, children's pastor, and the designated elder of the church to discuss the situation and the team member's Request For Reinstatement form. (If the designated elder so desires, the entire elder board may be included in this process.)
 - * If, after reviewing the team member's Request For Reinstatement form, the children's pastor, or designated elder or elders so decide, a mandatory leave of absence" of 6 to 12 months may be required prior to reinstating the team member to service. At the conclusion of such a mandatory leave of absence the team member may be required, at the children's pastor's or designated elder's discretion, to submit an updated Request For Reinstatement. Prior to being reinstated, the team member must meet with the children's pastor and designated elder.
 - ** If, after reviewing the team member's situation, the children's pastor, or designated elder or elders decide that reinstating the team member may place the children or children's ministry at risk, they may choose to refuse to reinstate the team member to service in the children's ministry. The team member may or may not be invited to become involved in service in other areas of the church.
3. Anyone who has been removed from service in the children's ministry based on an apparent lack of commitment or dedication to the children's ministry may apply for reinstatement only after all of the following conditions have been met:
 - a. The completion of the mandatory 1 year leave of absence
 - b. A completed Request For Reinstatement form with attached personal statement of growth and commitment from the team member. This form is returned to the children's pastor for review.
 - c. A meeting between the team member, the department coordinator, and children's pastor to review Request For Reinstatement. This can only take place after the completion of the mandatory 1 year leave of absence.
 - d. If it is determined, by the children's pastor, and the department coordinator, to reinstate the team member, the team member will be placed on a 3 -month probationary period. During this period, the team member's actions, which would indicate improvement in commitment or dedication to the children's ministry, will be evaluated.



- e. If, after the 3-month probationary period, the team member's commitment or dedication is no longer in question, the team member must meet with the department coordinator and the children's pastor to discuss what was learned during the reinstatement process. After this meeting, the team member will be returned to full, non-probationary status and will be given equal support and encouragement as other team members.
- f. If, during the 3-month probationary period, the team member's commitment or dedication is still in question, the team member will be removed from service immediately and permanently. The team member may never re-apply to be reinstated to any service in the children's ministry.

The "Reinstatement To Ministry Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe the Bible clearly teaches that we have a responsibility to offer forgiveness to a brother or sister who is repentant. We also believe that God has commanded us to be shepherds of the children in our ministry. In the case of a team member who has been removed from service, we are willing to reinstate him or her only under certain conditions.

CAUTION: NEVER reinstate a removed team member as a "ministry" to that team member's recovery! The CM is not a recovery ministry! If the person needs to be assisted in his / her recovery, another ministry must be suggested!

1. Are there any situations for which a team member has been removed that warrant a "non-reinstatement" policy?
2. After removal from ministry, how long must a team member wait before applying for reinstatement?
3. How can you be sure the team member has "corrected" the problem?
4. What is the process for applying for reinstatement?
5. What communications are made to the senior pastor or other church administrators in considering the reinstatement application?
6. Who directly supervises the reinstated person during the reinstatement process and probation?
7. Will there be another probation period?
8. How long will the reinstated team member be on probation?
9. What will you tell others who serve with the team member during the probation period?
10. If the probation period proves that the problem is corrected, what happens to the documentation of the original situation?
11. What happens if the probation period proves that the problem is not corrected?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy to protect the safety of the children and integrity of the CM at all costs. If a member of the CM team should ever be removed from service, he / she may apply for reinstatement under the following conditions: *(now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).*

Category 8: The "Touching Policy"

Definition

This policy defines appropriate and inappropriate touch and clarifies the consequences of the inappropriate touching of children.

Rationale

Children of this impersonal world of today need to be touched. This policy clearly describes appropriate and inappropriate touching. Unless we describe both in detail, we cannot expect the team members to know the difference. Unless we train and communicate the team members in the appropriate forms of touch, we cannot correct those who touch inappropriately.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding touching clearly define what is appropriate and what is inappropriate touching? Does your policy clearly state the consequences for touching a child inappropriately?

Sample "Touching Policy"

It is the policy of the CM to train those who serve on the CM in the appropriate forms of touching children, and then to encourage the team members to use the "tool" of touch freely in developing relationships with children. We believe that touching children appropriately increases the ministry to the children. We also believe that inappropriate touching can severely damage the child and thereby impeding the spread of the Gospel in that child's life for many years or even forever. We also believe that those who willfully touch children inappropriately, or permit children to be touched inappropriately, will face judgement from God and immediate removal from the CM.



"But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! ...But woe to the man through whom they come!"

Matthew 18: 6-8

Appropriate touching is any touching that occurs on the child's shoulders, arms, hands, upper back, or head. Inappropriate touching is any touching that occurs in areas that the swimsuit covers. The inappropriate areas are: the chest, buttocks, pelvis, or lower back.

It is also not appropriate for team members to permit children to sit on their laps. (*Your church may permit children to sit on the laps of female team members.*) The "appearance of evil" is not healthy for the team member or the CM. If a child climbs up onto the lap of a team member, the team member should briefly hug the child and then either get up and let the child sit on the chair or ask the child to sit on his or her own chair. The team member should be careful not to "jump" or otherwise negatively react to the child's innocent desire for closeness. Strong reactions may scare the child or give the child the message that the team member doesn't like him or her.

Other inappropriate touching is:

1. Giving a child a "back rub," or massage
2. Frontal hugging (sideways hugs are appropriate)
3. Tickling a child (inappropriate touching may occur unexpectedly)
4. Kissing or licking a child on any part of the body

A team member who has been accused of inappropriate touching will be asked to take a break from service while the accusation is investigated. Those involved in the investigation can include the other team members present in the room at the time of the alleged touching, the children's pastor, the senior pastor, and any other assistant administrators who are invited to be a part of the investigation. If, after the investigation, it is determined that the team member did touch the child inappropriately, he or she will be removed from service. It will be the decision of the investigating members, and the senior pastor, if a report should be made to the police. A formal apology will be made to the parents of the child. The church attorney should be contacted regarding preparation for any legal proceedings that may be filed by the parents. If, after the investigation, it is determined that the team member did not touch the child inappropriately, he or she will be returned to service as usual.

The "Touching Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe that children today need to be touched. We believe that touch is a God-created way to express love, and encouragement. We recognize that touch can also be harmful if done incorrectly, or carelessly.

1. What do you define as "good touching"?
2. What do you define as "bad touching"?
3. How will you teach "good touching" to your team members?
4. What is the process for dealing with accusations of "bad touching"?
5. What will happen to the team member who touched a child inappropriately by mistake?
6. What will happen to the team member who touched a child inappropriately on purpose?
7. How will you abide by the law to report child abusers if a team member touched a child inappropriately on purpose?
8. What communications will be made to the senior pastor or other church administrators?
9. What communications will be made to the parents of the child who was touched?
10. How will you document all the facts and conversations regarding the accusations of inappropriate touching by a team member?
11. Who has access to the documentation?
12. Where will the documentation be kept?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy to protect the safety of the children while still providing the necessary, appropriate touch they so much desire. We will do all we can to provide appropriate touching through the following process: (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

Category 9: The "Discipline Policy"

Definition

This policy sets the procedures for managing the learning environment and for controlling the children's behavior in appropriate, child-targeted ways.

Rationale

Today's children are less controlled, and less disciplined than ever before. It is the challenge of the CM team members to create a learning environment that attracts the children to the lesson and keeps them interested through real-life applications and enjoyable experiences that are appropriate to their age group. If this is accomplished, there will be fewer "discipline problems." Those discipline problems that do arise must be handled with the emphasis on **discipline** and not on **punishment**. The discipline measures must be gentle, yet firm. We must focus on the child needing discipline while not neglecting the other children.

Evaluation

Does your policy regarding the **discipline** of children protect the children from harm? Does the policy protect you, the children's ministry, and the church from accusations of negligence? Does the policy clearly state the process for dealing with disruptive children through classroom management, building relationships, and positive reinforcement?



Sample "Discipline Policy"

It is our desire to create, and preserve environments in which children feel safe, secure, and loved. Because of this goal, we believe we must do all we can to maintain control in every CM class or area.

We believe that children need boundaries which are created and reinforced with gentleness and understanding. We also believe that there will be certain children who need extra attention and encouragement in discipline. It is the focus of our policy to protect the ministry environment while still being sensitive to the needs of each individual child.

We believe there are three critical components to an effective discipline process: the teacher's personal relationship with Jesus, the classroom environment (classroom management), and the treatment of the children. Our discipline policy / procedures will be divided into these three areas.

1. The Teacher's Personal Relationship With Jesus

We believe a person's actions are determined by his or her emotional/spiritual health. Jesus said, *"...the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders..."* (Mt. 15:19). We believe that, as a person becomes more acquainted with the grace and mercy of Jesus, that person will treat others with more grace and mercy (Col. 3: 12-17).

It is the policy of the CM, that all those who serve in the CM must attend church services regularly and be devoted to growing in their own personal relationship to Jesus. This consistent spiritual growth will have a positive effect on the treatment of the children in our ministry.

2. Classroom Management

We believe the classroom environment effects every child in that classroom. A class that is “out of control” more than likely began that way long before the first child arrived. An effective children’s ministry team plans for a controlled, yet enjoyable classroom environment. The children’s lack of discipline problems is simply a result of that planning.



It is our policy that each CM team member accomplish the following:

1. **Pray regularly** for the children in the class (especially for the “challengers”).
2. **Review the lesson** several days before the presentation to become familiar with it, and to let the Lord begin to prepare his/her heart.
3. **Complete any craft preparation before class** time so the children can be the focus of attention when they arrive.
4. **Arrive at least 15 minutes before class time** so the room and lesson supplies can be arranged.
5. **Greet each child** as he/she enters. This lays a foundation of love and trust which greatly effects classroom discipline.
6. **Be excited about the lesson, the children, and the Lord!** Children will “mirror” our feelings. The more we are “into” the lesson, the less problems we will have with the children’s attitudes.
7. **Plan for variety in the classroom.** Movement, activity changes, the use of audio/visuals, the use of drama, all draw the children into the lesson.
8. **Give positive “rewards” to those who behave or participate.** Rather than focusing on the “problem child,” let’s focus on the children who are good examples!

We understand that life isn’t always predictable, and that family needs and personal matters may affect the successful accomplishment of the above preparation. We simply desire consistent effort toward these goals.

3. The Treatment of Children

It is our policy that the children who attend our ministry classes or events will leave better than they arrived. It is also our policy to not permit a few children from ruining the learning environment for the rest of the class. The blending of these two policy statements requires a God-given wisdom!



Classroom management begins before the children enter the room. The CM team members’ and the children’s attitudes prior to the class time effect what happens in the class. We cannot control what happens in the children’s home before class. With God’s help, we **can** control how we treat them in class. We must be ready for all actions and reactions.

It is very important to clearly state the rules or standards of the class. Most children want to do what is right. If we do not tell them what we expect, we cannot expect them to do what we want. If we have clearly told them what we expect, and they fail to do it, we can assume it is a choice on their part (unless they are too young to make such a choice). The following is a brief description of our discipline policy / process:

1. **Make every child feel loved and welcome.** This happens as soon as they enter the classroom. Eye-contact and smiles work wonders!
2. **Clearly state expectations.** Make sure directions and expectations are clear and understood. Speak slowly and friendly. Give examples if needed.
3. **Reinforce positive behavior.** Compliment children who do what you expect. Say, "Good job," "nicely done," or "thank you."
4. **Correct negative behavior.** Verbally correct the wrong behavior, clarify the standards, compliment the positive behavior if / when it happens. **DO NOT TOUCH A CHILD IN ANGER!** If you must touch a child to separate him/her from others, be very careful not to squeeze or shake a child. **Hitting, squeezing, slapping, pushing, or shaking a child may result in the children's ministry team member's immediate removal from ministry.** See the "Removal From Ministry" policy section. Reinstatement to ministry may be accomplished through the process outlined in the "Reinstatement To Ministry" policy section.
5. **Separate disruptive children** from others. If a child continues to misbehave, regardless of all attempts to positively encourage the right behavior, separate the child from the rest of the class. **NO CHILD WILL EVER BE SENT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM ALONE.** Children may be separated within the classroom only. Children must always be within the direct supervision of the CM team members. **No team member will be permitted to be alone with a child outside the classroom.**
6. **Pray with the child.** The difference between a ministry and a public school environment is in the focus on developing the child (discipline) instead of controlling the child (punishment). Pray with the child and ask God to help the child as he/she develops.
7. **Communicate with the parent(s)** regarding the child's behavior. Remain positive and hopeful while still being truthful. **Make sure another team member is present when a parent is talked to about the child.** If the child is an extreme, consistent challenge, the team member may refer the matter to the children's pastor.
8. **Build relationships with the children!** Control, power, and threats are all weak discipline tools compared to a healthy, sincere relationship! Instead of backing away from a disruptive child, move toward him. Get to know what he likes or dislikes. Become interested in his hobbies or sports interests. If you develop a relationship, the child will not want to damage that relationship with disruptive behavior. You will soon be able to communicate with the child through eye-contact from across the room!



The "Discipline Policy" Template

General Belief Statement:

We believe that children benefit from secure, realistic boundaries. We believe in reinforcing those boundaries through encouragement and gentle correction. We believe that developing relationships with children is the greatest way to "discipline" them. If a child chooses not to respond to our attempts at gentle correction, we are forced to protect our ministry to the other children while not giving up on the disruptive child.

1. How will you challenge your team members to develop relationships with the children as a step in the discipline process?

2. What is the effect of a creative, challenging, fun learning environment on children's discipline choices?
3. How will you train the team members in the process of discipline?
4. How can you train the team members in relationship-building?
5. What is the process for dealing with a disruptive child?
6. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
7. What do you think about touching a child during discipline? What are the dangers?
8. What do you think about putting a child "outside" all alone as a form of punishment?
9. What role do other team members play in the discipline process?
10. What happens to a team member who disciplines a child inappropriately?
11. What communications should be made to the parent(s) of a child who is disruptive?

Now, write your policy:

It is our policy to protect the safety of the children while still supporting the standards for appropriate behavior in the children's ministry learning environments. If a child is disruptive, we will do all we can to care for the needs of the child as well as the other children and team members by : (now, simply add all the requirements that you listed above).

How To Make Changes In The Ministry To Apply Your Policies



Making changes in your CM to apply your safety policies is a daunting challenge. If the ministry is going well, you might be hesitant to “rock the boat” by applying new safety policies. You must focus on the ultimate goal of leading the CM into being a safe place for the children and the team members.

As you prayerfully consider the changes that you need to make in order to establish your safety policies, you may find yourself facing some fear or hesitancy within yourself. You must always remember to apply the challenge of “What’s best for the children?” This question will always help you focus your attention and plans on the safety of the children. Your fears or hesitancy will fade in comparison to this question. Don’t attempt to make any changes without surrounding yourself with others who can pour wisdom into your plans. Here are two verses that may help you.

...Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors, they succeed.

Solomon,
Proverbs 15: 22

Fear not, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely, I will help you, surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

The Lord,
Isaiah 41: 10

The CM will always need more volunteers, and those volunteers need clearly established perimeters to operate as part of a unified team. The process of applying and establishing the policies is not complex, but it is very critical that you follow some important steps in the initial stages of making the changes that will implement the policy decisions.

Deciding On The Needed Changes

- **Ask the pastor for permission to form a group to discuss possible changes.** This group may be comprised of yourself, the pastor, and an elder. You may want to hand pick the group's members. This group **will not** enact any changes, but they will brainstorm the possibilities with you.
- **Have all policies approved by the pastor, the church board and elders.** These policies have serious legal implications, and you want the leaders of your church to be fully informed about any procedures that may ultimately affect them.
- **Invite the church attorney or insurance agent to approve the policies and changes.** These two people are critical to "have on your side" should a lawsuit be instigated. These two people must advise you from the very start.
- **Formulate a list of possible changes, giving careful thought to timing.** Be careful not to suggest that too many changes be attempted at one time. People can only take so much! Pray for wisdom as you consider **His** timing.
- **Determine the cost(s) involved.** This will give the pastor the kind of complete information he needs to give you adequate guidance. Be careful not to get bids on any job without telling the person that this has not been approved yet. You don't want word getting back to the pastor that you are beginning on the project without his support. If there are optional ways of doing the job, be sure to price those too. You do not want to do any changing without his support. Be ready for him to ask you some questions or make suggestions that will challenge you to consider different pathways. Pray that Jesus will speak to and through the pastor, pray for wisdom!

Now that you have an approved list of needed changes and some idea of when to make these changes, you can begin to work on the actual changes themselves.

People don't like to have their comfort zone disrupted. Therefore, you **must** devote a significant amount of time to the preparation of the people prior to the change occurring. A new "finger-printing policy" could send your current CM team flying! They may feel like their privacy is being invaded. If you are confident that the Lord is in favor of this change, and that it will enhance the ministry-potential to the children, you will not have any problem reproducing that vision.

Changes always need a focus. If the purpose or focus is clear, people will rally around it. If the purpose or focus is unclear, the people will do all they can to protect themselves. Clarify that the changes you plan to make are to protect the children! Communicate to the CM team that these changes are difficult for the whole team, but they are worth it! The success of any change, in human terms, is directly proportional to the thought and preparation given it prior to its inception. Here are some simple steps to making changes a bit easier to swallow:



Preparing For Changes

- **Pray for prepared hearts.** You can humanly do only so much! With the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts of those affected by the change, what you do will be much more effective. Pray for unity!
- **Provide the people with enough data to see the need for change.** You will not please everyone this way, but you may succeed in opening most of their eyes to the necessity for improvement.
- **Highlight the positive goals involved.** Do all you can to "sell" your CM team on your plans. Use all techniques the Lord may have blessed you with to excite the people about these thrilling improvements. With Jesus' help, the future is bright!
- **Give dissenters an audience.** There will be those who disagree with what you are planning. There are people who seem to be "gifted" at finding fault no matter what is done. Give them personal attention, listen to their ideas, tell them you understand, thank them for their honesty and commitment to the CM. The more support you give them, the less conflict they will give you!
- **Stand consistently firm.** If you have followed the steps suggested here, you should be able to be confident in what you're doing. You must stand firm behind your goals and vision. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't listen to other people's opinions, and maybe even apply them, but it does mean that you cannot appear "wishy-washy." There's a fine line between being bull-headed and being confident. The difference is how you treat others, and **their** ideas. If you have some doubts, there's nothing wrong with contacting others, or the pastor again for reinforcement or more wisdom.
- **Spread the good news!** Once you begin to see some fruit because of your change, let the whole CM, and the pastor know about it. This will reinforce the fact that God is with you, and that He cares enough to help you make decisions. This may also calm the CM team members who questioned your plans. You may still have dissenters, but you have a friend in Him who loves these little children more than you can ever imagine. Put your faith in Jesus and open your heart to the people who will be affected by your newly formed policies. Ask yourself these questions:



"Can I feel the feelings or fears of the people who will be affected by these changes?"

"If someone disagrees with my decisions, do I take it personally? Why?"

(This is a good reason to have an 'advisory council'; as a group, you can share the blame!)

"Is it easy for me to admit a mistake? Do I plan not to fail? Am I setting my 'ego-sights' too high?"

"Is my confidence in the Lord, those who counsel me, or in myself?"

Remember who you are and who He is

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from Me, you can do nothing."

- Jesus

John 15:5



