



---

# MINISTRY SAFE

---

Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Children and Youth Ministries



## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

*Last Updated: April 2, 2025*

Dear Children / Youth Volunteer Staff or Staff Member,

Welcome to Ravenswood Naz!

At Ravenswood Naz, we take our responsibility to care for children and youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for our church volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children and youth, protecting children and youth, you, and the mission of Ravenswood Naz. The following procedures have been adopted and will be enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen K. Zirkle".

Rev. Stephen Zirkle, Senior Pastor

Danielle Somerville, NDI President

## Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Policies & Procedures for Children & Youth Ministries

### Contents:

• Overview of Safety System.....	3
• Child Safety Policy.....	4
• Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse.....	5
• Safety Committee.....	6
• Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan.....	7
• Building Safety.....	8
• Worker to Child Ratio.....	8
• Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guidelines.....	9
• Intoxicants.....	10
• Medication.....	10
• Nudity.....	10
• One-to-One Interaction with Child.....	10
• Transportation.....	10
• Parental Contact.....	11
• Parental Involvement.....	11
• Physical Contact.....	11
• Sexually Oriented Conversations.....	12
• Sexually Oriented Materials.....	12
• Tobacco Use.....	12
• Verbal Interactions.....	12
• Release of Children.....	12
• Supervision.....	12
• Statement of Acknowledgement & Agreement (Personal Copy).....	13

### **RETURN Signed Copies:**

• <i>Statement of Acknowledgement &amp; Agreement (Church Copy)</i> .....	14
• <i>WV DHHR Authorization and Release for Protective Services Record Check</i>	

## Overview of the Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene Safety System

Because we love children and youth, our desire is to protect them. Ravenswood Naz requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete 4 SAFETY STEPS before ministry work or volunteer placements begin. See our website:

[www.ravenswoodnaz.com/ministries/ministry-safe](http://www.ravenswoodnaz.com/ministries/ministry-safe) for all of the links provided to complete these steps.

### **STEP ONE: Screening Process**

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- Complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- Complete a face-to-face interview (employees & volunteer)
- Provide references to be checked (employees & volunteer)

\*A volunteer for Children/Youth Ministry must attend Ravenswood Naz for 6 months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students, or vulnerable populations.

### **STEP TWO: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Ravenswood Naz's policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to the Senior Pastor, or a church board member. Staff members and volunteers should understand the basic characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in "grooming" a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust, (and trust of the child's parent or "gatekeeper"), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Ravenswood staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behaviors, Ravenswood Naz requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training (live or online). This training should be reviewed every two years: <https://teamwv.org/prevent-child-abuse-wv/child-sexual-abuse-prevention/>

### **STEP THREE: Policies, Procedures, & Background Checks**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

Ravenswood Naz requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a WV Background Check. If the volunteer has not lived in the state of WV for 5 years, a FBI Criminal Background Check will be required. Depending upon the position, different levels or intensity of background checks may be required.

If a volunteer is arrested for or convicted of an offense that would constitute ground for denying participation in our children or youth ministries, or is named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, the volunteer must provide the NDI President or the Senior Pastor with written notice no later than 72 hours (3 days) after the arrest, conviction, or notification that the person has been listed as a perpetrator in the statewide database.

## Child Safety Policy

The mission of the Church of the Nazarene that drives everything we do is to make Christlike disciples in the nations. We recognize that in order to fulfill this mission, the discipleship ministries of our local churches must take place in safe and nurturing environments that strive to protect all of God's family from harm, especially those who are most vulnerable. We understand that no dynamic community of faith seriously engaged in this mission can ever be fully insulated against the scourge of sexual misconduct with minors. Despite the inescapable reality of evil, we recognize that He [Jesus Christ] who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Creating this safe environment requires awareness, diligence, and monitoring on a consistent and systematic basis. With an even greater commitment to the mission, we must develop sound policies and preventative practices which, when earnestly and vigilantly enforced, offer the best protection possible to the most vulnerable among us.

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at Ravenswood Naz to act in the best interests of all children or youth in every program. All workers, leaders, and pastoral staff are to be above reproach in their conduct and to act in the best interest of others. This requires not only that they themselves refrain from engaging in any abusive or suspicious behavior involving minors; they will also be required to report without delay to the proper authorities anyone seen engaging in such behavior.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observation to the NDI President or the Senior Pastor.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Ravenswood Naz is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Church Board, and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agencies.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to the Senior Pastor or a member of the Church Board. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Senior Pastor or a member of the Church Board.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Ravenswood Naz staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry/Youth Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and the Church Board.

## Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

To maintain a safe environment for our children, Ravenswood Naz staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Senior Pastor, or the Church Board.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministries/Youth Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students, or vulnerable populations at Ravenswood Naz. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Ravenswood Naz.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

Staff members and volunteers at Ravenswood Naz are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker to the immediate supervisor of the area, the Senior Pastor, or the Church Board.

West Virginia law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency. A staff member or volunteer *may* report to an immediate supervisor, the NDI President or the Senior Pastor and allow supervisory personnel to assist in making the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Children's Ministries/Youth Ministry, the NDI President or Senior Pastor will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Senior Pastor will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, the NDI President or the Senior Pastor will inform West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

**Anytime you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, you should report your concerns to Centralized Intake (CI) at 1-800-352-6513.**

## Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene Safety Committee

### **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Ravenswood Naz will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet at least once a year.

### **MISSIONS STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety committee is to enable Ravenswood Naz Children's Ministries and Youth Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

### **COMPOSITION**

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. NDI President
2. NYI (Youth) President
3. Children's Pastor/Director (if applicable)
4. Day Care Director
5. Senior Pastor
6. One other Church Board Member

### **MEETINGS**

The NDI President (or the Senior Pastor) will chair the meeting of the safety committee to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Ravenswood Naz policies and procedures related to children's and youth safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Safety Committee regarding safety issues.
4. All meetings and information shared will remain CONFIDENTIAL!

### Children's & Youth Ministries Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interactions with children.

1. The NDI President or Senior Pastor will conduct an unscheduled observation at least once each quarter for programs that occur in our Children's/Youth Ministry.
2. The Senior Pastor conducts written performance evaluations every year for individuals in paid staff positions.
3. The NDI President conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
4. The Senior Pastor meets with the NDI President & NYI President once quarterly to discuss Children's/Youth Ministry.
5. The Church Board meets with the NDI President & NYI President once each year to discuss Children's/Youth Ministry, including safety training and procedures.



## BUILDING SAFETY

The NDI President will be responsible for ensuring that the area around the Children's/Youth areas are monitored during classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the building during children's ministry programming or classes. **Two-person Rule** will apply to Children & Youth Ministries staff members or volunteers. Risk is reduced if these persons are unrelated. Staff & Volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present).

After every programming event, Children/Youth Ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

## WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

Ravenswood Naz is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children/Youth Ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child ratios will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children	WV
Nursery	1	4	1:4
Preschool, 2yrs. Old	2	16	1:8
Preschool, 3yrs. Old	2	20	1:10
Preschool, 4-5yrs. Old	2	24	1:12
Elementary, 6yrs. Old +	2	32	1:16
Youth Ministry	2	20	

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the NDI President. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with church policy.

## **BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES**

### *Nursery Children*

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### **Diapering**

1. Only nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
2. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
3. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables
4. Child should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
5. Children should be changed on changing station only.

#### **Toilet training**

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. Only nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with child of either sex.
3. When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
4. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
5. Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members.
6. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothes before returning to the room with other children.
7. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

### *School Age children*

Parents will be encouraged to take their children to the restroom prior to each class/session.

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.)

The restroom should be checked for safety before children have access to the restroom. The adult should wait outside the restroom until all children have exited. A child should not be allowed to go alone to an unattended hall restroom. No adult should be in a restroom with a child when the door is closed. Providing a hall monitor at all times can give the added protection of two adults.

If a staff member or volunteer go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straitening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member.

#### *Special Needs*

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

## INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

## MEDICATION

***NO medication may be administered*** by staff members or volunteers. Child's parent or legal guardian are only authorized to do so.

## NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers in Ravenswood Naz Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (Example: changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.) staff members/volunteers will submit a plan to the NDI President concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

## ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Ravenswood Naz Children and Youth Ministries. Another adult who has completed the Ravenswood Naz screening process should always be present.

Counseling sessions with minors require parental consent. Counseling with a minor should take place in a space with observation windows.

## TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stop to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving any type of vehicle owned or rented by Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under the age of 25 may drive Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene owned or rented vehicles.

## **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a child in the care of Ravenswood Naz staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children/Youth Ministry.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Ravenswood Naz. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at Ravenswood Naz will be required to complete the Ravenswood Naz volunteer application and screening process.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Ravenswood Naz is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Ravenswood Naz has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children/Youth Ministry while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in these ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers of children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching, or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the NDI President, or the Senior Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children, youth, staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in our ministries must always foster trust. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Children & Youth Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the NDI President, or the Senior Pastor.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers in Children and Youth Ministries at Ravenswood Naz are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

## **TOBACCO USE**

Ravenswood Naz requires staff and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Ravenswood Naz activities and programs. Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene is a tobacco-free facility.

## **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers, children and youth should be positive and uplifting. Ravenswood Naz staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

## **RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Ravenswood Naz staff members and volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of service activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

If staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the NDI President before releasing the child.

## **SUPERVISION**

Staff members and volunteers in Children/Youth Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Children and Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Ravenswood.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary services at Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene at any time (if possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Policies and Procedures manual.

---

Staff Member or Volunteer's Name (please print)

---

Staff Member or Volunteer's Signature

---

Date

# PERSONAL COPY

**[This page to remain attached to the Ravenswood Policies & Procedures.]**

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Children and Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary services at Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene at any time (if possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of Ravenswood Church of the Nazarene's Policies and Procedures manual.

---

Staff Member or Volunteer's Name (please print)

---

Staff Member or Volunteer's Signature

---

Date

# CHURCH COPY

**[This page to be given to the NDI President or Senior Pastor.]**