

First United Methodist Church of Carrollton

Children's Check-in and Security Plan

Introduction

Parent¹ - Thank you for entrusting your child to FUMC Carrollton's caregivers. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve your family by providing Christ centered teaching to your child in a safe and fun environment.

Caregivers - Thank you for serving the families and guests of FUMC Carrollton by the giving of your time and service to teach their children about the God that loves them, Jesus whom we model our lives after, and the Holy Spirit that guides and teaches us how to follow that model - all in a safe and fun environment. Thank you for making the commitment to be a caregiver by submitting to an annual background check and by completing the MinistrySafe Safety System training.

Everyone - All of us like to have fun while learning. By acting out skits, playing games, singing songs, etc. it makes the teaching dynamic. A fun environment is also a safe environment. It is hard to have fun if distracted by fears and concerns. In our Children's Ministry, the safety of the children is paramount and we do not want to make any compromises in that aspect.

It used to be sufficient for the parents and caregivers to automatically trust each other because it was within a church environment. Maybe the parents and caregivers even recognize each other from seeing each other "around church". But as our church grows it becomes exponentially more difficult for the parents and caregivers to truly know each other. With extended families, blended families, divorce and family violence it can be impossible for caregivers to feel confident if someone else other than the one dropped off the child wants to pick-up the child. We also have many families that "share" their children with other families, but the caregiver has no means of knowing when it is appropriate to release that child to the non-family member.

The Solution - It is because we recognize these issues faced by parents and caregivers and the church's desire to not compromise the safety of the children that FUMC Carrollton has decided to implement a simple child sign-in and pick-up process. The purpose of this document is to outline the process for both the parent and the caregiver. We have tried to cover as many scenarios as we could think of while keeping the process simple. A system is only as good as the people using it and any documented process is going to make it "not as easy as it used to be". Keep in mind the common goal of the process, the child's safety, and if you have questions about

¹ When we use the word "parent or parents" we recognize that it could be the child's older sibling, an extended family member, a guardian, a trusted adult, etc. We require that the person checking in the child be at least 13 years old and be able to provide emergency contact information for the child.

the process or comments that will improve the process please contact the church's Christian Education Director, the Nursery Coordinator or the Children's Council chairperson. Their contact information is on the church's website or can be obtained by contacting the church office.

We are providing the information for both the parent and caregiver in the same document so each can know what guidelines the other is following in the hope that it fosters mutual understanding to further the common goal of providing a safe environment for the child.

Parent

When you arrive at FUMC Carrollton we ask that you sign-in your child at the appropriate classroom. We feel that children that have completed the 4th grade are capable of safely going to their Sunday School classrooms by themselves, but parents are welcome to escort any of their children to their respective classrooms. The younger classrooms will have a sign-in sheet that in most cases will have your child's name and information already completed. If there is incomplete or incorrect information or you are a visitor, please write in the requested information. Please do not leave your child unattended in the classroom if the teacher is not there. **Do not leave without receiving a numbered ticket for each child that you sign-in!**

We are using a system that uses a two-part ticket with matching numbers on each part. For each child that you sign-in you will receive one half of the ticket and the teacher will write the child's name on the other half and retain that half. When you return to pick-up your child, you will present the numbered ticket that you received when the child was signed-in. The teacher will match the numbered ticket that you provided to the one with the child's name on it and release the child to you. It is that simple! Here is the important thing to remember - if you do not have the matching numbered ticket for a child, the teachers are instructed to not release the child to you or anyone else that does not have the matching ticket. This may seem ridiculous when the child knows that you are mommy, daddy, grandpa, etc. and wants to leave with you or you signed in the child but misplaced the ticket. But, please understand that the caregiver has no reliable means to know who should be allowed to pick-up the child. Also, in many of our children's classes you may find that the teacher that was in the classroom when you signed your child in is not the same teacher when you return to pick-up your child.

If you want someone else to pick-up your child or children, you need to give the matching ticket to that person.

Please be aware that we are asking all caregivers to not rely on their friendship and familiarity with the parents to make a decision that is contrary to what we have asked them to do. It is an unfortunate truth that the caregiver cannot always know what has happened within a family within the past week or even the night before that may invalidate what they "think is okay".

If there are any issues that cannot be resolved by following these guidelines, we are asking the parents and the caregivers to contact the Christian Education Director or the Nursery Coordinator. They will take responsibility for the safety of the child and make the appropriate decision after reviewing the issue.

Review

1. Always write an emergency contact cell phone number if there is not already one for your child on the classroom's sign-in sheet. If your child's information has been pre-filled, please review it for accuracy and make any needed any corrections.
2. Make sure you receive a numbered ticket for each child that you sign-in.
3. Make sure that anyone that is going to pick up the child, for any reason, has the numbered ticket that was given to you when the child was signed into the classroom.
4. Do not allow your child to "sign themselves in" by allowing them to go to their class by themselves.
5. If there is an issue, then contact the Christian Education Director or the Nursery Coordinator and let them resolve it.

Caregiver

Thank you for sharing your time and talents with the families of FUMC Carrollton by taking the responsibility to be a caregiver in the nursery or one of the classrooms. As part of that responsibility we are asking that you be the "frontline" in ensuring that the children are released only to the appropriate parents or guardians that the parents have designated. We believe that the use of the two-part numbered ticket system will provide a simple and effective means to accomplish that.

When parents arrive at your classroom we ask that make your best effort to greet the child and the accompanying adult. This can be difficult at times when there are already other children in the room, but your active participation in the sign-in process is critical. If necessary, please assist the parent in the sign-in process by making the sign-in sheet easily accessible and by checking to make sure the emergency contact information is complete, especially the cell phone number where the parent can be reached. **The critical step is to ensure that the parent receives one half of the numbered ticket and that the name of the child is written on the half that you will retain.** This must be done for each child that the parent is signing in. It is not an issue if the parent is signing in children other than their own or if grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, etc as long as they can provide the cell phone number and can take responsibility for the numbered tickets that they receive for each child. If the parent is not familiar with our system (visitors for example), then please take a moment to explain to them that the child will only be released to the person that has the matching half to the ticket that you will retain. And that if they want someone other than themselves to pick-up the child later, they will have to give their matching ticket to that person so they can present it to the caregiver. Please make sure that you are keeping the matching halves that you have kept in a secure location where the children cannot access them. We normally expect that there will be 2 caregivers in each classroom at all times so make sure that both of you know where the tickets are being secured. Many of our caregivers are in the classroom during Sunday School hour, but not during the Worship hour. Make sure that the caregivers that come in to relieve you know where you have secured the tickets.

When someone is picking up a child it is also critical that you never release a child to someone that cannot present the matching half to the ticket that you retained.

Even if you know the parent we are asking you to never release a child to someone that cannot present the matching ticket. If you need assistance resolving an issue, then please have your caregiver partner contact the Christian Education Director or the Nursery Coordinator. You do not need to solve the issue.

When a child has been picked up at the end of the Worship hour, i.e., "church is over" or at the end of any event in which the security process was in use, the matching ticket that you retained must be thrown away, preferably torn in half. New tickets will be issued the next time that child is signed in. Tickets are never re-used.

"Donut time"

During Fellowship time (the time between the Sunday School hour and the Worship hour) many parents choose to pick up their child and sometimes their friends children to take them to get donuts. We still require that the matching ticket be presented before the child or children can be released to them. In this special case you and the parent will retain the matching halves of the tickets to be used again at the end of the Worship hour if the child will be returning to the classroom at the conclusion of "Donut time".

Review

1. Make sure that each child is signed in and that the emergency cell phone contact number is written by the parent on the sign-in sheet
2. Make sure the parent receives their half of the matching ticket and that you write the name of the child on the back of the ticket that you keep.
3. Store the tickets in a secure location in the classroom and that all caregivers know where that is.
4. Never release a child to anyone that cannot present the matching ticket to the half that you have.
5. Do not rely on your own relationship with the person that is picking up the child to make an exception to the process.
6. If there is an issue, then contact the Christian Education Director or the Nursery Coordinator and let them resolve it.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I've asked someone that I trust with my child to pick him/her up, but the caregiver is refusing to release my child to them. I feel like you are infringing on my parental rights in regards to my child's safety. Why does the process have to be so rigid?

A. The caregiver has no way of knowing whether the person that you sent to pick up your child is still your trusted friend. The caregiver might not know you or the friend well enough to make that judgment reliably or they might, but nevertheless we have asked them to always insist on having the matching ticket for a child before releasing them to anyone.

Q. I lost my ticket and the caregiver won't release my child to me, this is ridiculous! Why not?

A. Remember that the caregiver you are now talking to may not have been the same one that was in the classroom when you signed your child in. They have no way of knowing if they should release the child to you. Even though the child is saying "I want to go with Mommy (or Daddy or Grandpa/Grandma, etc.), the caregiver does know what the current family situation is. In the interest of placing the child's safety first, we have asked the caregivers to strictly follow the process. When there is an issue like this we are asking that the parent and caregiver contact the Christian Education Director or the Nursery Coordinator so they can take the responsibility for determining and deciding when a child can be released to someone that cannot present the matching ticket. The only exception to this is when the same parent is picking up the same child and is being released by the same caregiver that was in the classroom when the child was signed in.

Q. I sign-in and pick-up the same children in the same classrooms every week. Can't I just use the same ticket that I had last week?

A. No, we are asking the caregivers to destroy the matching ticket to your ticket when the child has been released to you so your ticket from last week will be of no use. The exception to the destruction of matching tickets when a child is released is at "Donut time" if the parent informs us that the child will be returning.

Q. I am the caregiver and was told a child would be returning from "Donut time", but in fact never did. What do I do with that matching ticket?

A. When all children have been released, you must destroy all of the matching tickets that you have.

Q. We arrived at church just in time for my child to go forward for the children's sermon. I did not want them to miss it so we did not sign him/her in to their classroom. What should I do when the children are released at the end of the children's sermon?

A. We don't want your child to miss the children's sermon either! Let them go forward but tell your child to return to you and then you may go and sign your child in to their classroom. Please keep an eye on your child in case he/she decides to follow their classmates and teacher to the classroom. If that happens please join your child and sign them in to the classroom.

Q. I am the caregiver and we ran out of tickets or a parent arrived to sign in their child before we had tickets to give them. What do I do?

A. If this happens please find any piece of paper and write any random number that you want to on both halves of the paper. Write the child's name on the half that you will retain and also sign it with your name. Use a different number for each "ticket" that you have to make in this manner and be sure to let the Christian Education Director or the Nursery Coordinator know so they can make sure you have a set of matching tickets brought to the classroom.