

Discipline Guidelines and Expectations for Children At Arlington Heights Evangelical Free Church

We love children at AHEFC and are thrilled to have them among us. The volunteer staff of Children's Ministries, including Awana, counts it a real privilege and blessing to assist in the teaching, growth, and formation of young lives. Our general goals for our children from birth through fourth grade are to help them:

- 1) Come to know Christ as Savior and grow in their walk with Him,
- 2) Develop positive relationships with adults who can serve as Christian role models to the children,
- 3) Develop significant friendships with other children who can become a Christian peer group for them,
- 4) See themselves as the Creator sees them.

In order to help achieve these goals, the environment of our programs and clubs needs to be conducive to learning and developing positive relationships. One aspect of creating and maintaining this environment is proper discipline. Scripture teaches us that we are to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives (Titus 2:12). The training for that kind of living starts at an early age and needs to be reinforced both in the home and at church. We believe that discipline involves the cooperation of the child, the parent and the teacher/leader. In light of that, we have put together some guiding principles and expectations for proper behavior of all children attending AHEFC programs. We ask that parents, as well as teachers/leaders discuss and reinforce these guidelines with their children.

Guiding Principles

Although it is possible to control the outward actions of a child and produce a desired behavior, the goal of our ministry to young people is to guide their hearts toward God and cultivate a spirit, which is responsive to Him. It is out of a responsive heart that true obedience and discipline flows, not merely conformity to a set of rules.

We believe that discipline should be primarily positive and so we encourage parents, and those who work with children, to be quick to encourage and affirm positive behavior. We also encourage immediate and consistent response to negative behavior before it escalates into a serious problem. If the parents are present we will expect them to correct their children when they misbehave. We will also encourage other adults not to ignore a behavior problem when they see it. If someone else speaks to your child, please do not be offended or insulted.

If the parents are not present, the person in charge may respond by first speaking to the child and issuing a warning. If the child persists in the behavior, he may be denied a privilege or isolated from the group. The last resource available to the worker is to notify the parent, or take the child to them if they are in the building.

Since it is our conviction that parents are the appropriate persons to apply corporal punishment when needed (and this is best carried out privately), any physical form of correction is considered unacceptable in the classroom or any other group setting. Those working with children are permitted to gently restrain a child to keep him from hurting himself or another.

Guiding Principles (Continued)

We will maintain high standards for behavior at AHEFC but we are also committed to being fair and realistic about our expectations of children. We understand that children are wiggly and have a lot of energy. As parents and ministry leaders, we must do our best to consider children and their limits and try to accommodate their needs as much as possible.

Expectations of Children at AHEFC

- 1. Respect for the house of the Lord:** Children will be expected to treat the church building, furnishings, and equipment in a way that honors the Lord and to use those things in the way that they were intended. Specifically, children will be asked to put trash in trash containers (not on the floor) and to write only on paper (not on tables, walls, or furniture). Space and equipment should be left in the same or better condition than it was found. Children or their parents may be asked to accept responsibility for accidental or intentional damage to church property or equipment.
- 2. Respect for Adults:** We want the children of AHEFC to honor the adults in the church with respectful speech and behavior. Children are expected to follow the instructions of their teacher/leader. We will also encourage children to use Mr., Mrs., or Miss when addressing adults.
- 3. Respect for Others:** We will strive to provide a physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe environment for every child involved at AHEFC. Children will be encouraged to think before they speak and find encouraging things to say to others. Therefore, mean, crude, or hurtful speech or actions toward others are not acceptable.

In addition, we ask that children walk, rather than run, through the church. A child running through the hallways may not be a concern to most people but for a 75-year-old woman who is shaky on her feet and terrified of a broken hip, a running child poses a very serious threat. It is important for certain guidelines to be in effect for the sake of the "family".

- 4. Respect for Themselves:** We will encourage children not to act in ways that will put their bodies or their faith at risk.

As a church family, we gladly stand with parents and are eager to do all we can to support and encourage them in their parenting responsibilities. We consider it a serious responsibility to teach the full counsel of God and inspire children in faith, in love and in righteousness. Some children struggle with behavior problems more than others do. The Children's Ministry staff is eager to pray, strategize and work with parents to find solutions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. We ask that you please discuss it with your children. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us.

Linda Hrivnak
Pastor to Children