

Student Training Manual

Gateway Church | Austin, Texas

1. Volunteer Guidelines

Requirements to Volunteer

All NextGen volunteers must attend orientation, submit a NextGen Volunteer Application, complete a criminal background check (18 years and older), and area-specific training. Some roles may require an additional interview as well.

Volunteer roles within Student Ministry require a one-year, every week commitment (Except program and production teams who may serve at every service one Sunday per month). Volunteers unable to serve in this capacity have the option of serving in a Flex Team role.

Any individual who has not undergone the above process cannot volunteer in any capacity within NextGen. This includes family and friends of approved volunteers.

Age-Specific Responsibility

Adult Volunteer (adults aged 18 and older)

Volunteers aged 18 and older carry full responsibility. This means maintaining supervision over a specific group of students, monitoring use of the bathrooms, communicating with parents, and more.

Junior Volunteer (kids and students aged 17 or younger)

Volunteers under the age of 18 do not carry the same responsibilities as adult volunteers. Junior volunteers are not to run check-in. Junior volunteers are to be partnered with an adult volunteer when assisting in leading a small group. Middle School students may serve in Elementary. High School students may serve in Middle School after their Freshman year.

Expectations

The middle school and high school student holds incredible potential for spiritual and relational influence. What students learn about God and others will develop the foundation they build on for the rest of their lives. Because of this huge responsibility, we have outlined our expectations of you as a volunteer:

1. Arrive On Time (30 minutes prior to service time)

All NextGen volunteers are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to gather for a short devotional/prayer time, prepare for the service, and greet the students and parents as they arrive.

2. Be Prepared

Arrive on Sunday fully prepared and ready to serve. This means having reviewed the curriculum, small group questions, and the win for the week. You can find this on our *Lead Small App*.

3. Communicate

Your coach or ministry leader will frequently communicate with you via email, text message, etc. We ask that you return the favor by communicating with us. This means letting us know well in advance when you'll be out of town, texting or emailing us on Sunday morning if an emergency arises, or requesting more supplies if you run out. We love to hear from you!

Additionally, we desire to have a community of transparency and honesty. If something isn't working, you are not overstepping your boundaries by bringing it to light. We highly value your constructive criticism and feedback.

4. Develop

We recognize that every volunteer is at a different place on his or her spiritual journey. We ask that you would continue to grow in your faith as you serve. The best environment we can create for kids is one where they see a living and active faith in the adults and teens who lead them. Here are some tangible ways you can develop as you serve:

a. Attend a Service

Serving in NextGen should not take the place of attending a service in the auditorium. If you come to a place where you can only serve or attend a service, we ask that you step out of your volunteer role in order to continue attending service.

b. Live Connected

Life change happens best in the context of relationships. We ask that you join a life group or connect in a running partner relationship where someone else knows you and is helping you move forward in your faith.

c. Contribute

We are so thankful that you're contributing your time and talents for students at Gateway. It would be impossible to support the amazing ministries our church offers without the generous financial support

of people who call Gateway home. As a volunteer, you have a vested interest in seeing the ministry to kids excel. Your financial commitment to Gateway through tithes and offerings resource many life-changing ministries. Together, we can make a massive impact that we could never make alone.

Did you know you can give online and sign up for regular monthly giving? This is the easiest way to give. Visit gatewaychurch.com/give

Appearance and Presentation

We hope to inspire confidence in parents as they leave their kids in our care for the hour they attend a service. This means maintaining a clean, neat appearance with both our environments and volunteers. Please take initiative to ensure your area is clean and safe as kids arrive.

As a volunteer, it is your responsibility to arrive in appropriate clothing, clean, and fully alert. Because Gateway is a “come as you are” culture, we encourage you to dress casually, but please ensure that your dress is modest as well as functional for your role. The ideal outfit may include jeans and a NextGen shirt we provide.

Any volunteer who is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be promptly escorted off Gateway’s campus. This will be followed up with a meeting or phone call to discuss next steps from one of our NextGen staff members.

2. Safety and Security

There is nothing more important to us than the safety and security of the students who are entrusted to our care. We have thus implemented a strategic safety and security system throughout NextGen.

Volunteer Identification

All volunteers should check in at the front desk or at a self check-in station 30 minutes before service starts and affix his/her nametag to the outermost layer of clothing, making it easily visible. A volunteer’s nametag should be worn for the duration of the service.

Student Identification

Students will self check-in at the door if they are in Middle School, and the middle school student is expected to wear their nametag. High school students will be

checked in via their roster in small groups or in the guest group, they will not receive a nametag.

A visiting student or first-time guest should be properly introduced to a small group leader immediately after check-in, and also introduced to some students in their respective grade.

Approved Visitor Identification

Very infrequently, members of another church or other interested parties will visit Gateway during services to see how our ministry is run. These individuals will also be given “Approved Visitor” nametags. They are only permitted to observe; approved visitors may not interact with children in any way.

Stranger in the Building

Twenty minutes after each service begins, only approved adults and children with nametags are permitted to be inside the building. All other individuals should be asked to leave.

Child Custody Issue

If a parent mentions a custody issue restricting someone from picking up or interacting with their child, please direct them to a staff member immediately.

3. Accidents and Emergencies

Location of First Aid Kits

In case of emergency, you will have access to three first aid kits.

- One in the café behind the serving counter.
- One in the production booth.
- One on the second floor in the staff copy room.

Administering Medication

We are not authorized to administer any over-the-counter or prescription medications. If a student asks for medication of any kind, call his/her parents immediately. (The only exception is an EpiPen if pre-approved by parent for use in the case of an emergency.)

Emergency Procedures

Fire—in development

Tornado—in development

Abduction—in development

Intruder—in development

Room Evacuation

1. Count the number of students in your small group and instruct them to form a single file line, leading them along the designated evacuation route.
2. Stay with your group and count the number of kids in your group multiple times along the way. Do not leave your group for any reason.
3. Staff and security will sweep the building after students have been evacuated to find any stragglers. Do not re-enter the building for any reason.
4. Do not allow parents to take their child from your care in the process of evacuation—inform parents that they may walk with you, but that you cannot yet release their child. Once you have been cleared to release kids to their parents.

If any child is injured in the process of evacuation and needs first aid, please alert a coach or staff member immediately, but stay with your group. First aid will be brought to you.

Injuries

In the event of an adult or child being injured, alert a coach or staff member immediately.

Below is the procedure for an injured child:

1. Remain calm. If the child is seriously injured, move other children away from the injured individual and assess the situation. Alert a coach or staff member so they can assist the child and notify parents or medical staff if necessary.
2. Keep the injured individual comfortable. This may mean laying him/her down, pouring a drink of water, or applying a bandage.
3. While the coach/staff attends to the injured child, you may be asked to help complete an Incident Report (located in the NextGen office). This report will outline what happened to the child, as well as any sustained injuries.
4. Once the parent has arrived, the coach/staff member will explain the situation gently and ask the parent to sign the incident report. They will ensure the volunteer signs it as well.

In the event of a body fluid spill (due to a cut, nosebleed, vomit, etc.), latex gloves should be worn (located in First Aid kit).

Emergencies

In the event of a serious injury such as a broken bone, convulsion, fainting spell, or falling unconscious, follow the procedure below:

- Remain calm and divert kids away from the emergency.
- Do not move or leave the injured child.
- Send another volunteer to alert a coach and/or staff member.
- The coach or staff member will call the parents, as well as follow our Emergency Contact Procedures, as listed below.
- If a child must be transported to the hospital and parents cannot be located, a staff member will accompany the child.
- All volunteers and staff involved in the incident will write a report of what happened immediately following the emergency.
- A staff member will follow up with the parent as deemed appropriate and necessary.

Emergency Contact Policy

In the event of an emergency, please notify the NextGen staff member on duty so they can radio the appropriate authorities. If they are unable to help you, please call 911 immediately.

4. In-Class Policies and Procedures

Two-Volunteer Policy

Never be alone with a child. If a volunteer needs to leave his/her group of kids, a coach or staff member should be notified so that kids and volunteers aren't put in a compromising situation. When a married couple is volunteering together, a third volunteer needs to be present, since a married couple is legally considered one person.

Transfer of Children

Students should be monitored in the transfer to their small group in an orderly fashion. One leader should try to get ahead of the students and be the first to their room while the other leader is ensuring no students get left behind while going to small groups.

Bathroom Policies

If a student needs assistance, only enter the bathroom with another adult in the doorway watching you.

Parents, regular Gateway attenders, and volunteers should NOT be using the bathrooms in the garage/cafe. These bathrooms are for students only. Staff and adult volunteers are asked to use the bathrooms upstairs in the staff office. Adult volunteers may be asked by NextGen staff to simply do a bathroom check or routine walk through to make sure the bathroom is being used appropriately or if we suspect a student is in need of help or supervision.

Appropriate Touch

We value touch and the message of warmth it can convey. However, physical touch should be age and developmentally appropriate and is only appropriate when done publicly.

Below are the appropriate touch guidelines:

- When welcoming a student, we offer side hugs, fist bumps, or high fives.
- No creepy hugs.
- There is to be no extended hugging (creepy), tickling (just as creepy), or other prolonged physical contact of any kind (exceptionally creepy).
- Lap sitting is not permitted.
- Never touch a student in an area that would be covered with a bathing suit.
- Never kiss a student or coax a student to kiss you.
- Never allow a student to touch you in a way that is inappropriate.

Behavioral Expectations

We believe in creating an environment of respect. Students should understand what's expected of them while at Gateway.

- Respect each other
- Respect your leaders
- Respect your church

Proper Discipline

When a student is being disrespectful, use the following steps to discipline:

- 1st Warning – every student gets a second chance
- 2nd Warning – disruptive student is temporarily removed from activity
- 3rd Warning – Coach/staff member should be notified. Disruptive student is removed from environment and/or parents are notified.

Our desire is to love students with appropriate boundaries. We expect volunteers to be fair and consistent with communicating expectations and following through with discipline. Volunteers should invite coach/staff member to assist in correcting ongoing disrespectful behaviors. We strongly believe in the power of

relationship, and expect that all discipline is done through loving conversation with the student and parents.

Drop-Off Procedure

For the new or visiting student, check in volunteers will be the first contact. We hope to have the small group leader introduced and meet mom/dad upon first visit whether it be the beginning or end of the service. We want the handshake to happen immediately and begin to develop trust immediately.

Help new or shy children acclimate quickly by engaging in conversation or activities, in order to distract them from feelings of discomfort.

Well Child Drop-Off Policy

If a student shows these symptoms or simply appears ill or stated by the parent, please do not admit him/her to the program, they can go and attend regular service with the parents.

- Any degree of fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Unexplained or contagious skin rash
- Chronic cough
- Runny nose (especially with yellow/green discharge)
- Eye/ear infections
- Pink eye
- Parasites (nits, lice, mites, ring worm, etc.)

Instead, please contact a coach or staff member to tactfully and gently speak with the family.

Pick-Up Procedure

Unless given specific instructions from the parents our students “self-checkout” and are responsible for communicating and establishing a meeting place with the parents. New attenders should be notified of this process so they don’t come back to the garage expecting to pick up their child who isn’t there.

Special Needs

As a church, we highly value children with special needs and their families. We realize that these children sometimes require different types of environments or attention, and thus have implemented a program specific to them.

Frequently, the best way to love a child with special needs is to ask his/her parents what works best. When asking parents about their child with diagnosed

or undiagnosed special needs, be extremely gentle. If a family is unwilling to disclose any information about a child's special needs, please contact a coach or staff member to follow up.

4. Child Abuse and Protection

Gateway maintains a zero tolerance policy with regards to child abuse and neglect. The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse designed the definitions below.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can be defined as a non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage or death.

Physical/Emotional Neglect

Physical/Emotional neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic needs including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is constituted through the sexual exploitation of a child by an older person as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the older person, out of a need for power or economic reasons (such as prostitution, etc.).

Emotional Maltreatment

A pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and a sense of self worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation. It can also be defined as providing no love, support, or guidance for the child.

It is against the law and against Gateway's policy for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Familiarize yourself with the definitions and descriptions of child abuse listed above. If you suspect that a child involved in any of the programs of Gateway Church has been abused, the following procedure should be followed:

- Report the suspected abuse to a staff member.
- Do not interview the child regarding the suspected abuse. This could be considered leading the child.
- Do not discuss the suspected abuse with other volunteers, parents, or anyone else.
- All information regarding the child should be kept confidential with your ministry supervisor and the proper authorities.
- You may be asked to complete a **Suspected Child Abuse Report**.
Reporting child abuse is completely confidential.

We are legally obligated to protect the children in our care, which means we are also legally obligated to report symptoms that indicate potential abuse. As a volunteer, this legal responsibility is shared with you – please make your coach/staff member aware of any observations within 24 hours.

The Three Hurts

A NextGen staff member must be notified if one or more of the following has happened:

- A student is being hurt by someone else
- A student is hurting someone else.
- A student is hurting himself or herself.

In any of these three cases, you must break confidentiality with your student so that a NextGen staff member can walk through the situation with you. The staff member will discuss with the volunteer/leader how to best inform the parents and discuss the situation with the appropriate people involved.

If you have any further questions regarding any of the material in this training manual, please contact Gateway's Student Ministry at **students@gatewaychurch.com**

**Gateway Church Elementary Volunteer
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Gateway Church's Student Training Manual and understand the importance of the material within. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving at Gateway.

I understand that the manual may be modified, and any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Gateway.

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

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

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Student Pastor

Date