

Welcome to the
PM Pals' Volunteer
"Refresher"
Training



What is P.M. Pals?



PM Pals is a "kids' night out" program for children with special needs and their siblings. The program is offered *free* to any family in the community (not just members of the church) with children ages 4-months to 12 years. Parents benefit from having a night off to re-energize, reconnect with their spouse or friends, or run errands. Parenting a child with special needs can be an overwhelming role. The children benefit from having a safe and loving environment to play, while feeling completely accepted as who they are. Thank you for serving these special families!

Who are our volunteers?

- Loving, patient, and compassionate people 😊
- Ages 18 and older
- Junior volunteers may volunteer at age 14 with a parent or guardian
- If you find you can't make Friday evenings, you can also help by:
 - Helping provide a dinner for the volunteers
 - Helping provide a craft for the children
 - Helping organize special events such as Easter egg hunts or Christmas gifts for the children
 - Volunteer on Sunday mornings as a Kid's Pal in Sunday School



Review of Operating Policies



Where and what time do
volunteers meet for PM Pals?

5:30pm in the loft above the
gymnasium.



What should you do if you are running late or have to cancel after you already RSVP'd for PM Pals?

Call or text Bevin as soon as possible so she can re-assign your child and provide volunteer coverage.



What area of the church can PM Pals be in?

Volunteers and their assigned child should stay within the designated areas (not past the Children's Chapel except to go to a main event and not upstairs).



Who administers medications at PM Pals?

- Nurses or St. Luke's staff.
- Medication must be signed in and left at the front desk (with the exception of epi pens).
- The nurse will sign the medication log once medication is dispensed.



Do we provide food for children at PM Pals?

- No, due to food allergies and special diets. The parents are instructed to bring any food their child needs.
- If your child keeps complaining of hunger and does not have a snack, please notify Bevin.



What should I do if my contact information changes?

Notify Bevin so she can update it in our system. We don't want to lose touch with you!



How soon should new volunteers complete training?

Within their first year of volunteering (preferably in the first six months)



How old does a PM Pals volunteer need to be?

- A volunteer must be at least 18 years old.
- Children age 14 and older may volunteer as a junior volunteer if they are accompanied by their parent or legal guardian.



What is required to be a PM Pals' volunteer?

- Attend the "in-person" volunteer training
- Turn in a volunteer application with one written reference
- Consent to a background check
- Complete online safe sanctuary training.



Can I bring my pet to PM Pals?

No, only approved pets are allowed at PM Pals for main events (ex: pet ministry, petting zoo).



What is the rule about isolated situations?

There should always be at least two adults present (especially in restrooms). This is for your protection as well as the child's.



Should I take photos at PM Pals and post them on social media or the internet?

- Photos of children should never be shared on social media or the internet.
- Photos of adult volunteers are acceptable to share, with their permission.



What should I do if I want to bring a guest to PM Pals?

- Let Bevin know their name in advance so she can make them a name tag.
- They must complete a background check even for a one time visit.



Should I come to PM Pals if I am sick?

- No, we have children with weak immune systems so we do not want to risk spreading germs.
- Please be sure to cancel with Bevin as soon as possible so she can re-assign your child.



What should I do if my child has an accident?

- Notify the nurse or staff member as soon as possible.
- Tell the parents about any accidents at the end of the evening.
- Always call 911 first in an emergency and then come find the nurse or staff second.



What should you do if you see a stranger walking around at PM Pals without a PM Pals' shirt or name tag?

- Ask them if they are looking for a particular event at the church (they might just need directions to Fellowship Hall for a rehearsal)

--OR--

- Refer them to Bevin
- Be sure that Bevin is aware of the visitor(s)



What should I do if my child needs to go to the bathroom or needs a diaper change?

- Grab a relief volunteer or another volunteer to be present in the bathroom or during the diaper change.
- You can stay outside the restroom if the child can toilet independently.

What if someone other than the parent shows up to pick up my assigned child?

Notify Bevin immediately and do not let the child leave until Bevin confirms that the parent authorized someone else to pick up.



What time do we check diapers?

8:00 p.m. (or as needed).



How does confidentiality apply to PM Pals?

- A volunteer must treat each child's personal and medical information as confidential.
- Please shred the assignment list with all the children's names (or leave on Bevin's black rolling filing cabinet to be shredded).



What should I do when I meet the parents?

- Introduce yourself
- Ask how the child's day is going.
- If there are any medical instructions, refer to the nurse or staff.



What should I do when I pass my child off to a relief volunteer?

Introduce yourself and the child.
Be sure to get their name and
share any special instructions with
them.



Can I babysit for a PM Pals' family or help them outside of PM Pals?

- PM Pals strongly discourages outside contact and requires approval from the PM Pals coordinator or Director of Children's Ministries. These activities are discouraged since we can not provide it to all families and is not part of the mission of PM Pals.
- Exceptions are for professional relationships- therapists, etc.



Appropriate vs. inappropriate touch

- Appropriate touch:
 - Arm around shoulder
 - Holding hands
 - Short side hugs
 - Handshakes & high fives



- Inappropriate touch:
 - Anywhere a bathing suit would cover (unless during a diaper check with another adult present)
 - Touch should not be in anger, disgust, or sexually suggestive
 - Sitting in laps for over age 2.
 - For safety- please avoid piggy bag rides and wrestling



Special Needs Awareness

- Refer to the child/person before their special need/diagnosis.
- Use the word "special needs" rather than handicapped, disabled, mentally retarded, etc.
- Follow the parents' lead on how they talk about and label their child's needs/diagnosis.
- Remember the importance of confidentiality.
- Don't talk about the child (when they are present) as if they were not there.
- Focus on the child's strengths and what they can do.

General tips on working effectively with all children:

1. Give short, clear instructions
2. Set reasonable boundaries and stick to them
3. Praise often and unexpectedly- "Catch them" doing something good!
4. Word things positively (ex: "Please walk" instead of "No running!").
5. Give choices ("Do you want to go to the gym or the playground next?").

General tips on working effectively with all children: (continued)

6. Get on the child's level to talk.
7. Give warnings before transitions
(ex: "We have five more minutes before we need to go inside.")
8. Ask questions to check for understanding.
9. Give child ample time to process what you say and respond.
10. Show the child that you care-
They are all wonderfully created by God!

Sibling Issues

- Siblings might be struggling with issues related to their special needs sibling such as:
 - Over-identification
 - Embarrassment
 - Guilt
 - Shame
 - Isolation, loneliness, loss
 - Resentment
 - Increased responsibilities
 - Pressure to achieve
- Please be extra patient with them 😊



Thank you for your time!

Next step: Please take the online quiz



Questions?

Please contact Bevin Barrett
at 713-402-5053 or pmpals@stlukesmethodist.org