



# First Friends

PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN MINISTRY



## INTRODUCTION

**Mission:** Our mission is to love preschoolers and their families into a closer relationship with Jesus. We love children, and we want them to love Jesus!

**Strategy:** We strive to accomplish this by...

- Partnering with parents and equipping them to be the primary disciplers of their children.
- Providing a safe and secure environment where every child learns from the Bible through Bible conversations, singing, centers, and group time.

## PRESCHOOL BASICS

### First Time Guest

First time guests are invited to register at the Preschool Desk or online. You will be instructed to complete a one-time registration form. After completing the form, your child will be assigned to a classroom, and you will be walked through the procedures below. If you register online, please come to the Preschool Desk on Sunday for your child's room assignment.

### Check-In and Security Tags

First Friends desires to maintain the most secure environment possible for every child in our programs. In order to do so, we have the following check in procedures:

- Check in at our computer stations BEFORE dropping off your child by typing in your 10-digit phone number. Select the child's name to print off the security tag, name tag, and parent name tags. Place the name tag on the child BEFORE entering the classroom.
- On Sundays and Wednesday evenings, the responsible adult MUST wear a Preschool Parent/ Guest name tag in order to gain entry to the Preschool Suite. Access to the Suite is restricted to authorized individuals and is monitored by designated personnel.
- To sign a child into a classroom, fill in the information on the sign in sheet located at the door of the classroom. Your signature is required for signing in and signing out on a daily basis. Make note of your location and current phone number, in case we need to contact you about your child during the program. With known allergies, please make note on the sign-in sheet and notify the respective teachers. All children must be signed in and out by an adult (age 18 or older).
- Should we need to contact you during programming, we will text or call you. Please keep your phone on vibrate and in a visible place while your child is in our care.
- Only approved adults are able to pick up your child. If you would like to add an additional adult to be able to pick up your child (spouse, family member, etc), you must communicate that request via email or at the Preschool Desk so we can add that person to our system. No one can "borrow" your phone number or name tag to check in. Requests may only be made by parents/guardians currently on the child's list of approved adults.
- The responsible adult picking up the child must present the security tag upon pick up. If the security tag is lost or misplaced, the classroom teacher will direct the pick up person to the Front Desk Coordinator before picking up the child to have a replacement security tag issued.



- For a replacement security tag, the following procedure will be followed:
  - The responsible adult must show their driver's license to the Coordinator at the Preschool Desk.
  - The Coordinator will match your ID with the information in our database to ensure that person is connected with the child or on the list of approved persons to pick up the child.
  - A replacement security tag will then be issued.

### **Weekday Programs:**

#### **Alternative Pick-up**

If another person will be picking up your child, please let us know in advance and provide us with his/ her contact information on the alternate pick up form. We will then ask for their driver's license upon pick up, and they will be given a security tag. Your child will not be released to anyone who is not on the alternate pick up form, or who cannot prove their identity with a valid form of picture identification (driver's license, passport). Any updates or changes must be made in writing.

### **Personal Items**

Labeling – All items must be labeled, including bottles and diapers, with child's name.

#### **Things to pack:**

##### **Infants**

- Plastic or stainless steel bottles only (no glass bottles)
- Pacifier (if needed)
- Supply of disposable diapers  
(cloth diapers only with doctor's written instructions)
- Change of clothes
- Bib

##### **Ones and Twos**

- Supply of disposable diapers (cloth diapers only with doctor's written instructions)
- Change of clothes
- Water bottle
- Nap mat, blanket, lovey, etc.  
(weekday programs only)

##### **Threes through Fives**

- Change of clothes (if necessary)
- Water bottle
- Supply of pull ups (if necessary)
- Nap mat, blanket, lovey, etc. (weekday programs only)

#### **Things not to pack:**

- Tablets, phones, or any electronic devices
- Sleep sacks (for safety reasons, sleep sacks are not permitted in classrooms)
- Glass bottles
- Cloth diapers (without doctor's written permission)



## Snacks, Meals & Feeding Policy

Please serve your child breakfast before arriving. Children may not eat breakfast in the classroom. For all Sunday morning and Wednesday evening regular programming, children will be given church-provided snacks only. These snacks include saltine crackers or Cheerios. Due to allergies and the large number of children in these programs, we cannot serve individual snacks from home (including food pouches) unless there is a significant health-related dietary need. We do have gluten-free snacks available upon request. If a special snack will be served in the classroom, we will post an allergy alert at the classroom door. If your child does not have permission to eat the special snack, please alert your child's teacher.

### Bottle Feeding

Babies will be given bottles prepared according to the instructions given. Please only send plastic or stainless steel bottles as we cannot have glass bottles in the classrooms.

For weekday programs, bottles are not allowed in upstairs classrooms (sippy cups and water bottles only). For safety reasons, children are not permitted to self-feed a bottle while laying down.

### Potty Training (Weekday programming only)

Children in PreK3 and PreK4 classrooms must be potty-trained (turned age three on or before September 1st of the current school year).

### Special Snacks/Food Allergies

**Nut Free Zone** – The First Friends area is a nut-free zone. Please do not pack nuts or nut products of any kind for your child. This includes peanut/almond butter, almond/cashew milk, hazelnut spread, etc.

**Food Allergies** – Ingredients for any special snacks will be posted by the classroom door. For children with special food needs, please talk with your child's teacher to see what accommodations need to be made. For severe allergies, please see EpiPen Policy.

### Weekday Programs:

For weekday programs serving lunch, please provide a sack lunch/ baby food with eating utensils and a drink. ALL food containers/ pouches/ items must be labeled.

### Lunch Packing Guide for Weekday Programs

Please pack a healthy lunch for your child, including a water bottle or drink to be used at snack time and lunch time. We cannot heat, microwave, or refrigerate food for children. In the infant rooms, we are only able to warm bottles of milk.



Please ensure that children can eat packed food independently (within their abilities) and that food does not require teacher preparation beyond opening container lids.

Parents need to pre-cut any foods that could be a choking hazard. Teachers and staff do not have access to utensils to cut children's food. Teachers and staff reserve the right to not serve food that is not cut appropriately.

Avoid foods that may be choking hazards, and please note the following foods may pose a risk of choking:

- Whole hot dogs (hot dog pieces must be pre-cut into quarters)
- Whole grapes (grapes must be pre-cut into quarters)
- Raisins
- Large pieces of raw vegetables and fruit
- Hard candy
- Popcorn
- Chunks of meat, cheese, or beef jerky
- Chewing gum

Any items that contain nut-alternatives (soy butter, SunButter, etc.) must be clearly labeled.

For more information, please consult the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines on choking prevention.

## What to Wear

- Children should be dressed in appropriate clothing. Jackets should be sent for outside playground for colder weather.
- Modesty shorts or bloomers are strongly encouraged while wearing dresses or skirts. (Modesty shorts or bloomers are required for weekday programming.)
- Close-toed, playground friendly shoes are recommended for outside play. All upstairs children should be able to remove their own shoes independently for indoor playground use (weekday programming only).

## Special Needs

We love and welcome all children. In some situations though, we may lack the capacity and/or resources to provide a safe and secure environment for children with some special needs. Houston's First offers top-rate programming for children and adults with special needs on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings through Thru the Roof Ministry. For more information, visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) and search "Special Needs." If you have a concern about your child and are interested in registering for the First Friends Early Learning weekday program, please contact a staff member prior to registering.

## Schedule

A basic schedule for your child is described below. Schedules will vary based on age and classroom. Each room has a detailed schedule posted in the classroom.

- Bible Story group time
- Art activity
- Learning center
- Imaginative play
- Snack
- Music/ stretch and grow
- Playground (indoor or outdoor), buggy ride, and/ or nature walk



### **Weekday Programs:**

Schedule also includes:

- Lunch
- Nap/ quiet time

## **PRESCHOOL POLICIES**

### **Allergies and EpiPens**

Parents/guardians are responsible for informing Houston's First/First Friends Preschool and Kindergarten Ministry about their child's potential risk for anaphylaxis and for ensuring the provisions of ongoing health information and necessary medical supplies. The church will take reasonable measures to avoid allergens for affected children.

Even with the church's best efforts, staff and parents/ guardians need to be aware that it is not possible to achieve a completely allergen-free environment. However, the church will take precautions to reduce the risk of a child having an anaphylactic reaction by developing strategies to minimize the presence of allergens in the preschool area.

### **EpiPen Policy**

When leaving a child in the care of a First Friends program, parents of a child with severe allergies must bring two EpiPens in their original box with the prescription label. These pens will be kept at the Preschool Desk for emergency access. EpiPens must be current and not with expired expiration dates.

Parents must also complete the Food Allergy Action Plan which will be kept in a notebook at the desk. The Food Allergy Action Plan must also include a picture of the child.

If your child has a medical condition or severe allergy, he/ she will be required to wear a medical alert bracelet to help teachers and staff react quickly to any medical emergency. A paper alert bracelet may be obtained from the Preschool Desk.

### **Weekday Programs:**

*An EpiPen will not be administered to a child with allergies without a written form of consent from the parent and doctor. If we do not have a doctor's prescription for your child's medication, we will ONLY be able to call 911 in the event of an emergency.*

### **If a child in a classroom needs the EpiPen, the following procedure will be followed:**

Any teacher or volunteer will immediately call the front desk, and a staff member will bring the child's EpiPen to the classroom.

The coordinator will immediately call and text the parents and ask for assistance from a nurse if there is one available. In the absence of a nurse, a coordinator will immediately call 911 and security if there is any swelling or rash presentation on the child.



If there is a nurse available to evaluate the child, then the nurse will monitor the child and determine if an EpiPen should be used or if an alternative step from the Food Allergy Action Plan should be implemented. If it is determined that the child should need an EpiPen injection, then the nurse or supervising coordinator should administer the EpiPen in the thigh muscle of the child.

Only a nurse, staff member, or coordinator may administer an EpiPen. A second pen should be ready to use in the event that the child is still experiencing problems and EMS has not arrived.

## Illness Policy

Children who are ill should not attend programming.

We define illness as:

- Fever (within the last 24 hours) (for children and infants older than three month, an oral temperature of 100.4, rectal temperature of 101.4, axillary temperature of 99.4)
- Diarrhea (within the last 24 hours)
- Vomiting (within the last 24 hours)
- Rash
- Impetigo
- Persistent nasal mucous secretions
- Persistent cough
- Eye infections (red or running eyes)
- Uncovered skin lesions or wound infections
- Yellow skin or eyes (Jaundice)
- Head lice/bed bugs
- Sore throat
- Childhood diseases (Scarlet Fever, German Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox or Whooping Cough)
- Other communicable diseases such as Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease.

Parents will be called to pick up their child if the child shows any sign of illness. The preschool teachers and staff cannot diagnose any illness. Therefore, in protection of the other children in the program, a child showing signs of illness will be asked to be picked up immediately.

Child will be sent home for diarrhea that occurs two times during session. All open wounds, large scrapes, or cuts must be properly covered with a bandage and remain covered while the child is in attendance.

### **Weekday Programs:**

If a child is diagnosed with Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease, chickenpox, or mumps, a doctor's release will be required to return to the program. Parents will be contacted if a child appears ill during a session.



## Medication

If your child requires medication, the parent or caregiver is responsible for administering the medication. The Preschool Staff cannot administer any medication, including (but not limited to): diaper cream, cortisone cream, antibiotic ointment, etc., with the exception of those with a Food Allergy Action Plan.

If your child has diabetes medication or equipment, it must be kept with the parent or at the Preschool Front Desk. In the event medication is required, the parent will be alerted immediately to administer medication. For diabetes only, a "low kit" containing food to treat hypoglycemia may be left in the classroom as long as it aligns with current First Friends policies (no nuts, etc.) Needles or syringes may not be left in the classroom.

### Weekday Programs:

Please report all illnesses or other absences by 9:30a that day. You may call the Preschool Desk at 713.957.7619.

## Behavior Policies

### Aggressive Behavior Policy

Managing behavior is challenging when a child is putting himself or others in danger or is not able to regulate his own feelings or actions. When a child is struggling to regulate in a class situation and causes a disturbance that endangers himself or others, decisive action will be taken by the Coordinator.

For the purposes of this policy, Aggressive Behavior is defined as a child who causes harm to himself or others, either physically or psychologically, or destroys someone's belongings. Aggressive behavior includes actions such as **biting, impulsive hitting or slapping, throwing hard objects, kicking, and exhibiting meltdowns.**

#### 1st time

1. Teacher will address aggressive behavior with positive management techniques and contact the Coordinator. The Coordinator can assess the situation and offer behavior support to the teacher, if applicable. If biting occurs, the teacher will wash the area with soap and water, and apply ice to the affected area.
2. Teacher will complete the Incident Report and return the report to the Coordinator immediately.
3. The parents of both children (the one who was aggressive and the one who was injured) will be notified by the Coordinator and will sign the Take Home Incident Report. If multiple incidents occur within the same session, parent or caregiver will be called to pick up the aggressive child. This will count as one episode.

#### 2nd time (within a 3 month time frame)

1. Repeat steps 1-3 above according to the 1st time guidelines
2. Coordinator will discuss with the parents ways for helping the child better regulate in the classroom.
3. Parents of the aggressive child will need to complete a background check in the event that they are required to shadow their child in the classroom.





### 3rd time (within a 3 month time frame)

1. Repeat steps 1–3 above according to the 1st time guidelines
2. Begin steps for Parent Shadowing
  - a. Coordinator will communicate with parents to plan effective strategies for “shadowing” their child in the classroom: quick intervention before aggressive behavior can occur, parent-administered discipline after aggressive attempt, leaving early if needed.
  - b. The parent will be required to monitor and assist the aggressive child for three consecutive program sessions. After three sessions, the parent will discuss with the Coordinator to evaluate the progress of the child’s behavior.

\*In the event that the behavior continues after three sessions of parental assistance, the child may be asked to take a three-week break from the program. If professional services are needed, such as a counselor or a regulation specialist, the parent will be asked to sign a release of information form. The consulted professional will need to give a recommendation for re-entry into the program.

\*The First Friends staff reserves the right to make decisions for individual cases of aggressive behavior based upon the level of severity of an incident. This can include having a child take an immediate temporary break from the program. Staff will discuss further details with the parents to implement the best plan of action for the safety of all children involved.

## Volunteer Policies

We depend on volunteers in order to minister to the many families who attend the Loop Campus! We ask all approved Sunday morning parents to serve once a month or as a sub. All classroom volunteers must be approved through the following steps (known as our Safeguarding process). This process applies to all NextGen Ministries:

### Church Membership

Six months active involvement

Approved background check

### Approved volunteer application

Interview

Three references

Prospective volunteers who have not yet completed the screening process may be eligible to serve in the Prep Room where they will prepare materials for classroom and ministry use.

To start the volunteer intake process, fill out the Volunteer Interest Form at [HoustonFirst.org](http://HoustonFirst.org) (search “Preschool & Kindergarten” and click on the “Volunteer” tab) or stop by the First Friends Preschool Desk.

### Volunteer Training

All volunteers must complete a MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness video training. To ensure all volunteers are trained with the most up-to-date policies and procedures, we ask approved classroom volunteers to complete additional in-person and video trainings as assigned throughout the year.

### Special Events in the Classroom:

For special events occurring in classrooms during First Friends Early Learning weekday programming (such as classroom parties), attending guests must have a current background check. Watch for parent communication regarding these events and follow up with your program coordinator to make sure your background check is approved and up-to-date.

# PRESCHOOL PROCEDURES

## Emergency Procedures (including Evacuation, Lockdown, and Shelter-in-Place)

First Friends is constantly updating and training for emergency procedures including Evacuation, Lockdown, and Shelter-in-Place. We practice drills on a regular basis during weekday and Sunday programming.

## Weather-Related Closures

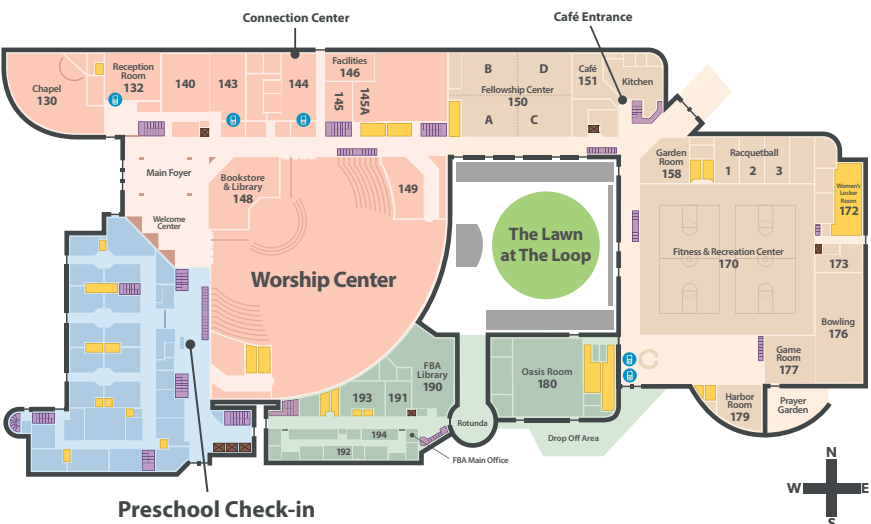
In the event of a weather-related closure, notification will be made in the following ways:

- Check the church website. If the office is closed, we will post a notice by 6:30a.
- Check the church's social media channels (Facebook and Twitter: @HoustonsFirst)
- Call the main church number and listen to the recording.
- Please don't assume preschool programming or the church offices are closed because local school districts are closed.
- It is your responsibility to check.

# NEXTGEN CHECK-IN LOCATIONS

## LEVEL 1

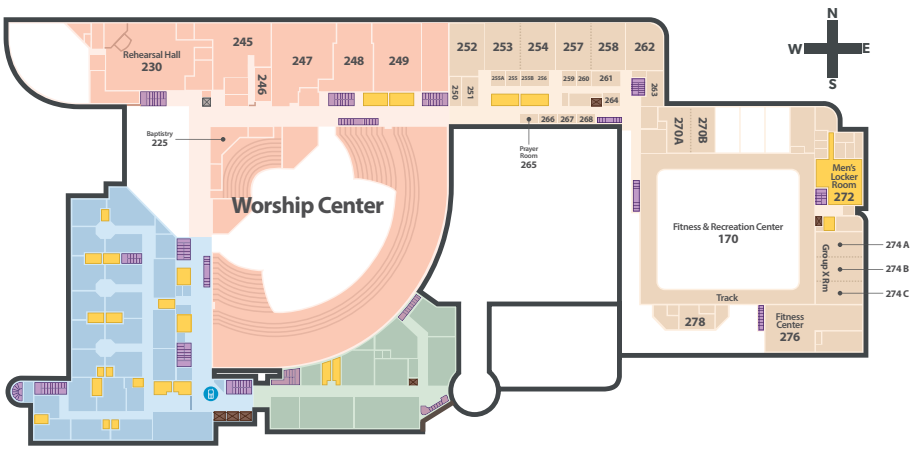
 Restrooms  Elevators  Stairs  Phone



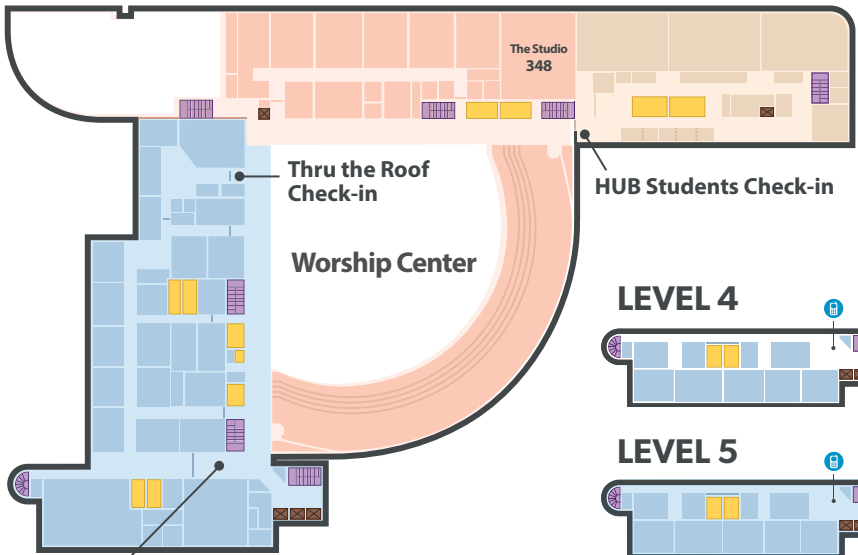


# LEVEL 2

Restrooms
  Elevators
  Stairs
  Phone

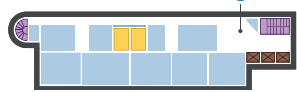


# LEVEL 3

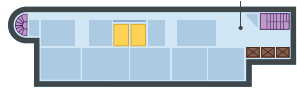


Children's Check-in / Guest Central

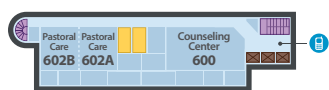
## LEVEL 4



## LEVEL 5



## LEVEL 6





HOUSTON'S FIRST  
BAPTIST CHURCH

[HoustonFirst.org](http://HoustonFirst.org)