



STUDENT HANDBOOK
2011-2012

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
WASHINGTON DC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	3
The Reformed Theological Seminary, Introduction	4
RTS PURPOSE STATEMENT	4
RTS Vision Statement	4
Accreditation	4
History	5
Spiritual Life	6
Community Commitments	6
Personal commitments	6
The Lord’s Day	6
Personal & Corporate Prayer	7
Study (as a Spiritual Activity)	7
Student Services	7
Financial Aid	7
Work Study	7
RTS Wireless server	8
Insurance	9
Students with Special Needs	10
Student Images	10
Academic Life	10
Academic Advising & Concerns	10
Registration	10
Drop/Add Policy	10
Class Attendance	11
Extended Absences	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Tests & Examinations	11
Plagiarism	11
Extension of Time for Papers or Other Academic Work	12
Grades	12
Study Habits	13
Library	13
Field Education	14
Spouses Taking Classes	15
Student Records	15
Accreditation standards	16
Conduct	16
Guidelines	16
Student Appeals	16
Sexual Harassment Policy	17
RTS Directory	18

Welcome

Greetings, we extend to you our warmest welcome! We are glad you have chosen to prepare for ministry at RTS Washington and we hope to make your adjustment to seminary life as easy and pleasant as possible. This Student Handbook is designed to help you know what to expect at RTS Washington and what is expected of you. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference. The Student Handbook contains useful pointers, policies, and procedures designed to help you settle in and stay on track.

Faculty and staff are accessible. All administrators and faculty members have office hours. Feel free to contact the appropriate person when you have a question, a suggestion, or a need. We are here to assist you. At RTS Washington, we desire to be a place where close, cordial relationships can be developed between students, faculty, and staff in the Spirit and love of Christ.

Please be patient during your first few weeks and months on campus. While the workload is substantial and challenging, you will be able to master the assignments with diligence, hard work, and fervent prayer. Refuse to let temporary discouragements tell you otherwise. Remember, we do everything in the presence of the Lord and for his glory.

We want your life at RTS Washington to be characterized by four commitments:

- 1) a commitment to the truth of the Scriptures and their application to all of life;
- 2) a commitment to thorough academic work offered to the Lord as your immediate vocation;
- 3) a commitment toward genuine loving relationships with God and one another, reflecting the self-sacrificing love of our Savior for us;
- and 4) a commitment to minister to the larger community and to the church as God provides the opportunity.

The Reformed Theological Seminary, Introduction

RTS PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of RTS is to serve the church in all branches of evangelical Christianity, especially the Presbyterian and Reformed family, by preparing its leaders, with a priority on pastors, and including missionaries, educators, counselors, and others through a program of theological education on the graduate level, based upon the authority of the inerrant Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Bible, and committed to the Reformed faith as set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* as accepted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America as its standard of doctrine at its first General Assembly in 1789. This program shall be characterized by biblical fidelity, confessional integrity, and academic excellence, and committed to the promotion of the spiritual growth of the students. The breadth of this ministry will include multiple campuses and extensions as led by the Lord.

RTS Vision Statement

Reformed Theological Seminary exists to glorify the Triune God and to serve His Church by providing excellent, globally accessible graduate theological education and pastoral training in the Reformed tradition, and by equipping its students for servant leadership that is marked by “A mind for truth. A heart for God.”

RTS-Washington participates in and applies the institutional purpose of RTS by forming generations of Christian leaders marked by a spirit of *semper reformanda*, which means “Always Reforming.” These kinds of leaders are nurtured in the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit of Christ to reform the church and transform the world. In this way, we hope to contribute to the Church’s role in making Christ’s invisible kingdom visible “... on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Accreditation

Reformed Theological Seminary is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools to award the following degrees: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Arts (Biblical Studies), Master of Arts (Religion), Master of Arts (Theological Studies), Master of Arts in Counseling, Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling, and Doctor of Ministry.

RTS Washington is approved to offer the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts (Religion).

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada:

The Commission on Accrediting
10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103
Telephone: 412.788.6505, www.ats.edu

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools:

Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097
Telephone: 404.679.4500, www.sacscoc.org

History

The turbulent 1960s had an impact not only on American politics but also on American churches. After a season of intense prayer during a meeting in a Memphis hotel room, five concerned pastors, led by Dr. Sam Patterson, gave birth to the idea of starting a new seminary committed to the authority of the Scriptures. Reformed Theological Seminary first opened its doors in Jackson, Mississippi, in the fall of 1966 with 14 eager seminary students. Times have changed and the vision has grown. Today, with its strong history and expanding presence, RTS is one of the largest, thriving, cutting-edge seminaries in North America with more than 2500 students across its multiple locations: Atlanta, Charlotte, Houston, Jackson, Memphis, Orlando, Washington D.C. and Virtual.

Over the past 40 years, RTS has educated more than 7,000 ministers, teachers, missionaries and counselors who have taken the Gospel of Jesus Christ to more than 55 countries through more than 46 denominations reaching millions of men, women and children with that good news. For the complete RTS story, see *The First Forty Years*, by church historian, librarian, and faculty member John Muether.

Spiritual Life

Community Commitments

As you begin—or continue—your seminary career, we invite you to join us in committing to:

1. The truth of Scriptures in its full expression and in the breadth of its application to all of life (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
2. Sharing of this with each other in hard work and personal service (1 Thess. 2:8).
3. A significant and thorough application to academic work offered to the Lord as our immediate vocation (2 Tim. 2:15-16).
4. A genuine and supportive friendship with each other, reflecting the self-sacrificing love of our Savior
for us (1 John 3:11, 16-18).

Personal commitments

The Apostle Paul wrote Timothy: “Watch your life and doctrine closely... (1 Tim. 4:16a). Your personal walk with the Lord merits your first and continuing concern. If your studies (even of Scripture and theology) overtake your personal devotion and formation in relational accountability, you can become dry and bitter. Be on guard against this, and cultivate specific disciplines during this time that will bear much fruit under the later (and greater) demands of ministry in the kingdom! John Frame’s, *Studying Theology as a Servant of Jesus*, contains valuable advice on this subject.

The Lord’s Day

The Lord’s Day is set aside for your worship with a local congregation and for your rest. You are urged to participate actively in a local church. This will be a valuable and indispensable element in your seminary experience. Some congregations accept students into affiliate membership; others will urge you to transfer your membership to that congregation. Either way, you will find great value in associating with a particular congregation throughout your seminary days. Take some time the first few months to determine where you will attend, and then commit yourself to faithfully attend and serve.

Lord's Day Observance also means that you should search your conscience regarding studying on the Lord's Day. Please do not call faculty or staff at their homes concerning academic or other seminary-related matters on the Lord's Day. For a list of area churches that students, faculty and staff attend, please contact the Director of Student Services.

Personal & Corporate Prayer

Opportunities for prayer—some organized, some spontaneous and individual—occur regularly. We vigorously encourage you to take advantage of them and to institute such practices regularly with your seminary classmates and faculty.

Study (as a Spiritual Activity)

Studying and preparing for class is your primary responsibility before God during your seminary days. Preparation for ministry is a consecrated activity. Commit yourself to preparing thoroughly and approaching your study as a devotional service of worship.

Student Services

Financial Aid

Financial Aid is awarded annually in the form of need-based grants, need-based partnerships with particular ministries, or merit based scholarships. Application for financial aid must be made to the Admissions Office. The deadline is June 1.

The Scholarship Committee reviews each application and determines aid depending upon allocation of available resources. All students who desire to be considered for Financial Aid must complete an Online Financial Aid Application by June 1 for the following academic year.

Work Study

Please contact the Executive Director for more information.

RTS Wireless server

Wireless network service is available for all members and guests of the RTS community. Current configuration information is as follows:

RTS Wireless Network Usage Policy

Use of RTS wireless networking services implies consent to RTS Wireless Network Usage Policy as follows:

1. Wireless network access is provided for use by members of the RTS community and is intended to support and enhance the educational experience.
2. Providing a safe and secure technological environment in a community setting requires cooperation from all members of the community.
3. Wireless network access may, on occasion, be taken offline without notice for testing, troubleshooting, expansion, etc.
4. Intellectual labor and creativity are highly valued by the seminary community. Therefore, because electronic information is so easily reproduced, respect for the work of others is especially critical as it relates to the use of technology. Any violation of original works such as plagiarism, unauthorized access, and copyright violations may be grounds for disciplinary action and/or loss of access privileges.
5. Volumes, libraries, directories, programs, files or data that does not belong to an individual should not be copied without prior authorization and is not allowed without such permission.
6. The Internet is a valuable resource for academic research, but may also serve as a source of content that is incongruent with the values of the seminary. To help preserve the integrity of Internet access, RTS' Wireless server maintains logs that record usage by computer. Inappropriate use may be subject to disciplinary action and/or loss of access privileges. In the event that sites of questionable content need to be viewed for the purposes of academic research, permission must be secured from the department head and forwarded to the IT Department.
7. Community technological resources may not be modified in any way by anyone outside RTS IT Department. Costs incurred to restore/replace equipment that has been altered or damaged will be assessed to those responsible.
8. Intentional harm or damage to RTS-owned technological resources by knowingly spreading

virus-infected files, malware, spyware, adware, etc., or any use of these resources for inappropriate conduct may result in disciplinary action and/or loss of privileges, and/or assessment of costs to repair/replace such resources.

10. RTS Information Technology Department is not responsible for support of any hardware or software not owned by RTS.

Insurance

There are at least two measures you can take to protect yourself from overwhelming financial problems:

1. **Medical Insurance.** The Seminary requires that medical insurance be maintained by all full-time students and their families. This will protect you from the financial disaster that can come through catastrophic illness. In order to register each Fall and Spring Term, each student must show proof of coverage under a personal policy (or coverage under a parent's or spouse's policy), or the student must enroll in the policy provided by the Seminary designed for the student body. Failure to comply with this standard may lead to de-enrollment. RTS offers a student major medical insurance plan through United Healthcare. For more information, please contact the Director of Admissions.
2. **Life Insurance.** Although life insurance is not required of Seminary students, it is a wise precaution and highly encouraged.

Students with Special Needs

The Director of Admissions handles the coordination of needed accommodation for student with disabilities and special needs. This includes students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and non-native English speakers. If you need assistance, please contact the seminary at the beginning of the semester. We will do all we can to accommodate your special needs when we know about them in advance.

Student Images

Students consent to and understand their image may be used in promotional and/or academic materials as needed by the institution. These materials include, but are not limited to, printed publications, electronic platforms, and social media. With the exception of images created for inclusion within the Student Directory, students may request their image not be used by submitting a written request to the Director of Student Services prior to the image's production.

Academic Life

Academic Advising & Concerns

Several curricula have been developed to meet a wide range of student needs for basic and advanced preparation for Christian service in any field. The catalog is designed to acquaint you with various program requirements and rewards. Become very familiar with its contents. You should plan your curriculum in close consultation with the catalog, and the Registrar.

If you should have a problem involving only a class, consult with that professor. If it is, or becomes, a wider matter, speak with your campus's registrar or Academic Dean.

Registration

All class registration is completed online via Self Service. Please see the link in the bottom right corner of the home page at www.rts.edu. Your RTS student ID number is your User ID. If you do not know your RTS student ID number, please contact the Office Administrator.

Drop/Add Policy

Students may drop/add courses via Self-Service until the online drop or add deadline. After the online deadline you may be able to drop a class through the Registrar if you are taking a weekend or modular course (see distinctions below). After the term begins, there is a fee for each

course dropped or added. Thus, it is recommended that you finalize your schedule before the first day of the term. See the most recent Schedule of Fees for the current drop/add fee. If a student drops a course prior to the drop deadline (through the first five weeks of a regular semester schedule, the second weekend of a weekend course, the second day of a week-long intensive, or the equivalent in other formats), the course is erased from the student's permanent record and the tuition is refunded. If a student withdraws from a course after the drop deadline, the grade "W" will be entered on the student's permanent record and the tuition is not refunded. The Director of Student Services should be consulted whenever a student considers withdrawing from a course.

Class Attendance

Your attendance at class sessions is expected. You will find different methods of presentation from different faculty members. Your task will be to adapt to various methods of presentation in order to learn well. Part of this process involves learning to learn. Decide what kind of notes you need for each class in order to comprehend the material. Recording class sessions is permitted with each professor's prior approval and is to be used solely for personal study and spiritual edification and is not to be distributed privately or publicly in any manner. The video recording of RTS courses by students is prohibited. Please remember that lectures and syllabi are the intellectual property of the professors. Distribution may be considered piracy.

Tests & Examinations

Tests and examinations, other than final examinations, are developed and administered according to each professor's requirements. Most professors indicate their testing schedule at the beginning of each semester. This does not preclude unscheduled examinations. Ask your professor what the policy is and the kind of response expected on examinations and then be prepared to respond accordingly.

Plagiarism

Research papers require borrowing other people's ideas and words. However, the source of such borrowing must be acknowledged properly so that your ideas are clearly distinguished from ideas that you borrowed. If the source is not acknowledged properly, your work is plagiarism. For an excellent summary on what constitutes plagiarism, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (rev. by Wayne C. Booth, etc.; 7th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 77-80 (section 7.9). Plagiarism includes word-for-word copying, lifting terms, restatement of someone's argument or

line of thought, etc.—all without acknowledgment of source. Plagiarism also includes giving a source partial credit when more is taken from that source than indicated.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is very serious. All plagiarism cases are referred to the Academic Dean for resolution. Consequences may include some of the following:

- *repeat the assignment and receive a maximum of a D on the assignment.
- *receive an F on the assignment
- *receive an F in the course
- *expulsion from the seminary.

Extension of Time for Papers or Other Academic Work

Deadlines for papers or other academic work must be observed. You may request an extension of time by consulting with your professor and/or the Academic Dean. Requests must be approved by the professor of the class and the Academic Dean. Students who request extensions should expect a reduction in their grades on work handed in late. Having all work completed on time is seen as an important part of training for ministry. You must familiarize yourself with the process and time limits for requesting extensions. If you have any questions, please speak with the Director of Student Services. International students and/or students with disabilities that affect completion of assignments or tests please contact both faculty and the Director of Student Services at the beginning of the semester in order to receive appropriate assistance. Please see Students with Special Needs (above).

Grades

Grades are posted online via Self-Service approximately five weeks after the last exam of any semester. Students with unpaid account balances will not receive grades until all obligations to the Seminary are fulfilled.

A	(97-100)	4.00
A-	(94-96)	3.66
B+	(91-93)	3.33
B	(88-90)	3.00
B-	(86-87)	2.66
C+	(83-85)	2.33
C	(80-82)	2.00
C-	(78-79)	1.66

D+	(75-77)	1.33	I- (incomplete)
D	(72-74)	1.00	W- (withdraw)
D-	(70-71)	0.66	S- (satisfactory)
F	(0-69)	0.00	P- (passing)

Study Habits

It is estimated that an average student at RTS will spend two hours in concentrated study for each hour of class time. This ideal is held in tension with the realities of life. Students who aim for this ratio tend to see the benefits at the end of the semester.

Library

RTS Washington is in the process of building and organizing its library. Look for additional resources to be made available to students in the near future.

Until that time, two types of library resources are available to you: borrowing privileges at local university and theological libraries, and the services of the RTS library system.

Washington Campus students are privileged to have access to the outstanding resources and services of the RTS Library. Services include inter-library loans and research assistance. The Orlando Campus library may be reached by calling 407/366-9493.

Locally, RTS students have borrowing privileges through RTS's membership in the Washington Theological Consortium. A full listing of participating institutions can be found at the Consortium's website: <http://www.washtheocon.org/>. An RTS student ID card is required to borrow materials from participating libraries. Please contact the Office Administrator for an ID card.

ATLA Information

ATLA Religion Index and other online databases allow students to search for periodical articles and dissertations by several different search keys (author, title, subject, keyword, etc)

Most of these databases require a password. The login info will be available through the Director of Student Services until such time as a Librarian joins the staff. Passwords are changed from time to time; students are responsible to obtain the new passwords from the Director of Student Services.

The RTS Libraries website (www.rts.edu/site/resources/library.aspx) has an extensive listing of added resources for study, many of which are online. This includes a listing of periodicals owned by all three campus libraries.

Interlibrary Loan (Non-RTS Libraries)

Books and articles not found in any RTS library can be sought through Inter-Library loan. This process generally takes longer than borrowing from other RTS campuses, so students need to initiate the process early enough in the semester to allow for the process. The library may reserve the right to pass along fees associated with ILL; any copies received through ILL will be charged to the student at **10 cents per page**. Books requested from a non-RTS library may take as long as 1-3 weeks to arrive.

Field Education

M.Div. students are required to have **400 field education hours and Field Education Seminar**. Each student is asked to have some kind of ministry internship during his/her time in seminary. This may be completed over a year long period (or longer) or a full-time summer experience.

1.Beginning Field Ed Internship Requirements.

Students should register for the PT536 Field Education Internship and contact Dr. Peter Lee, the Director of Field Education, in order to begin their 400 hour field education internship. During internships, students are under the supervision of pastors/mentors and the Director of Field Education at the seminary.

Students should consult the “Field Education Guidelines” concerning the necessary paperwork required for the completion of Field Education internships.

2.Field Education Seminar Course (PT534).

Once you have enrolled for PT536 you will be automatically registered for the PT534 Field Education Seminar each term until you complete your 400 hours and attend this seminar. This allows the Director to maintain a comprehensive list of all students who are involved in the Field Education process at any given time.

This seminar provides opportunity for theological reflection and discussion of problems, needs, and experiences in ministry. Students are required to write papers about their field experiences

and present them to the class for discussion led by the professor. This may be taken in the fall or spring semester.

This course is required for graduation for all M.Div. students.

Spouses Taking Classes

Spouses of full-time students may audit or enroll for credit in any course offered by the Seminary without charge provided he or she secures the permission of the professor and there is available seating. Details of specific course schedules are located online at www.rts.edu. Not only may these courses provide opportunity for your spiritual growth, but also they can help you become better acquainted with professors and others of the Seminary family. RTS graduates may audit (for free) any course they have previously taken and received credit for.

Student Records

RTS maintains the security and confidentiality of student educational records. All student records are kept in locked rooms and in locked file cabinets. In addition, all transcribed information for current degree-seeking students is digitally “backed-up” at an off -site location.

Since RTS does not accept Title IV student loan monies, RTS is not bound by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). However, RTS’ confidentiality policies are generally consistent with FERPA. RTS policies are as follows:

A student may inspect and review his/her academic file and transcript after a written request has been made to the Registrar’s office. The Registrar will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. The Registrar will be present during this inspection and review.

If a student believes his/her academic file and/or transcript are inaccurate or misleading, the student may request to amend the file and/or transcript. The student should write the Registrar, clearly identifying the portion of the record that the student wishes to change and specifying what is inaccurate or misleading. If RTS decides not to amend, the student may use the appeal process outlined elsewhere in this Handbook.

RTS will not disclose, without the student’s consent, personally identifiable information found in the student’s academic file or transcript, excepting legitimate educational interests and directory information.

Directory information includes, but is not limited to, name, address, telephone number, email, date and place of birth, spouse’s name, home state, previous schools attended, denomination and presbytery affiliation, grade level, dates of attendance, photo and photo of spouse, degree program, enrollment type (full-time, part-time), and degrees with date of graduation.

Accreditation standards

Reformed Theological Seminary maintains a goal to comply fully with the standards of accreditation of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada and the Commission of Colleges of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Students who believe that RTS has violated ATS and/or SACS standards in any way should submit their complaint in writing to their respective campus Academic Dean. The Dean will consult with the Chief Academic Officer, who serves as the coordinator of matters related to institutional accreditation. The complaint will be reviewed and a written response provided to the student in a timely fashion related to the receipt of the complaint.

At this point, if the student is not satisfied with the written response from RTS, the student may file a complaint directly with ATS and/or SACS.

Conduct

Guidelines

Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times as mature believers. Exemplary Christian conduct should control our words and our actions, both public and private. In today's technological environment our words can include texting, emails, social networking and blogging, in addition to our speech. Godly behavior, expected of all Christians, is especially required of those who are preparing themselves to become ministers of the Word or servants in the church. Classroom manners should also reflect this maturity. Students should be respectful of professors, attend all class periods, and hand in assignments on time. Classroom etiquette also includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet and laptop computer games and communicating to your neighbor during lectures.

Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students. The seminary reserves the right to dismiss any student whose conduct is found to be unsatisfactory on the basis of spiritual or moral principles found in the Scriptures. If desired, the student can appeal the dismissal according to the stated policy.

Student Appeals

An appeals process exists to resolve any behavioral or academic problem that cannot otherwise be settled in a Biblical manner and assures fairness to all parties concerned. This process is rarely needed and should only be used after all other means have been exhausted. For example, in academic matters that pertain to a class or a grade, the student should first work directly with the professor and/or Director of Student Services. Concerning behavioral or community issues, the student should first consult with the Dean of Students.

If the matter cannot be resolved by the above means, the following appeals process exists:

1. The student should submit a written appeal to the Academic Dean regarding the issue. Depending on the issue, the Academic Dean may request input from the Faculty. The Academic Dean will render a written decision.
2. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Academic Dean, then the student may submit a subsequent written appeal to the campus President requesting a hearing. The campus President may or may not grant the request. If granted, the campus President will appoint an ad hoc committee that may consist of trustees, faculty, staff, and/or institutional officers to hear the case. This committee is authorized to meet with any or all concerned parties to resolve the issue and will render a written decision concerning the case.
3. The decision of the President or the ad hoc committee is considered final, subject only to review by the Executive Committee of the Board to affirm the appeals process was properly observed.

Sexual Harassment Policy

The seminary expects all members of its community to apply sanctified common sense and Biblical principles to their relationships. It will not tolerate offensive or inappropriate sexual behavior and requires all faculty, staff and students to refrain from any action or conduct which could be viewed as sexual harassment. Any such harassment is contrary to and prohibited by seminary policy and will be considered grounds for disciplinary action. It should be noted that for academic purposes, some appropriate teaching and discussion of sexual information may occur, particularly in a counseling program; however, these discussions are necessary for the formation of a competent counselor or pastor and therefore does not constitute sexual harassment.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other offensive verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is expressly prohibited. Examples of prohibited conduct include but are not limited to lewd or sexually suggestive comments; off-color language or jokes of a sexual nature; verbal, graphic or physical conduct inappropriately relating to an individual's gender; or any display of sexually explicit pictures, greeting cards, articles, books, magazines, photos, computer images or cartoons.

The seminary must have the cooperation of all faculty, staff and students in order to implement its sexual harassment policy. It is the individual's responsibility to report immediately any incident which they believe to constitute sexual harassment. Even if they believe the act is isolated or infrequent, they should report it to the campus Dean of Students or President. The seminary will promptly investigate the situation and take whatever corrective action is necessary and appropriate. The seminary prohibits any retaliatory action against persons reporting conduct which is believed by the reporting individual to be in violation of this policy.

RTS Directory

Seminary: www.rts.edu Bookstore: www.mindandheart.com

Atlanta: 1580 Terrell Mill Rd, Marietta, GA 30067
 770-952-8884 ◦ 1-888-995-8665 ◦ Fax: 770-952-8686

Charlotte: 2101 Carmel Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226
 704-366-5066

D.C.: 1028 Balls Hill Rd., Mclean, VA 22101
 703-448-3393

Houston: 8300 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX 77024-1092
 832-377-1675

Jackson: 5422 Clinton Blvd., Jackson, MS 39209
 601-923-1600

Memphis: 4055 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN 38111
 901-507-4490

Orlando: 1231 Reformation Dr., Oviedo, FL 32765
 407-366-9493 ◦ 1-800-752-4382 ◦ Fax: 407-366-9425

Virtual: 2101 Carmel Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226
 704-366-4853 ◦ 1-800-227-2013 ◦ Fax: 704-366-9295

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