



YTH FOR THE ONE LEADER HANDBOOK

**POLICIES & PROCEDURES TO PROTECT
OUR STUDENTS, LEADERS & OUR CHURCH**

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

To provide guidelines on:

- Interacting with students

- Identifying & preventing child abuse

- Ensuring the safety of students while under church care

- Responding to and/or reporting an incident

WHEN YOU RECEIVE THIS HANDBOOK:

Read it in its entirety before you begin working with students if possible, or immediately thereafter.

Consult with youth pastor if there is something you do not understand or if you have questions

Keep a copy of the handbook nearby for easy reference in case any issues arise.

Comply with the policies and procedures in the handbook consistently. If for some reason you cannot comply, please promptly notify your youth pastor.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Minor

An individual who is under 18 years of age.

Student

A minor who is at least 11 years of age, but under 18 years of age.

Staff

Church employees and volunteers. Despite this definition, sometimes the words "staff and volunteers" are referenced in this handbook to ensure the reader is able to easily identify whether a policy applies to him or her.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Below are the general definitions of various forms of abuse. These definitions are intended to provide general guidance for the purpose of using this handbook. These definitions are not exhaustive, and do not necessarily include every form of abuse that must be reported under Florida law.

For further guidance on what constitutes abuse, visit myflfamilies.com

Physical Abuse

An injury that is inflicted by other than accidental means upon a minor, including intentionally injuring a minor.

Sexual Abuse

Any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a minor and an adult or between two minors. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other minor.

Sexual abuse also includes sexual exploitation, which includes preparing, selling or distributing pornographic materials involving children; performances involving obscene sexual conduct; or child prostitution.

Emotional Abuse

A mental or emotional injury to a minor that results in an observable and material impairment in the minor's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

Spiritual Abuse

The use of faith, belief, and/or religious practices to coerce, control or damage another for a purpose beyond the victim's well-being.

Neglect

The failure to provide for a minor's basic needs or the failure to protect a minor from harm.

CODE OF CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS

The following policies are intended to assist church staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with students.

For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor.

The church is committed to creating an environment for students that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from service. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with students or allegation of abuse will be taken seriously. The church will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.



CODE OF CONDUCT:

- 1.) Students will be treated with respect at all times.
- 2.) Students will be treated fairly regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, or age.
- 3.) Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by this handbook.
- 4.) Staff and volunteers will avoid affection with children and students that cannot be observed by others..
- 5.) Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interaction as outlined by this handbook.
- 6.) Staff and volunteers will not stare at or comment on students' bodies.
- 7.) Staff and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with students.
- 8.) Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of or in sight of children or students.
- 9.) Staff and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on church property or during church activities.
- 10.) Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with students and will only give gifts with prior permission of a supervisor.

CODE OF CONDUCT [CONT.]:

11.) Staff and volunteers will comply with church policies regarding interactions with children and students, even when outside of our programs.

12.) Staff and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with students.

13.) Staff and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with students in a private setting. Staff and volunteers will use common areas when working with individual students.

14.) Staff and volunteers will not abuse children or students in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:

Physical Abuse

Hitting, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints

Verbal Abuse

Degrading, threatening, cursing

Sexual Abuse

Inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations

Mental Abuse

Shaming, humiliation, cruelty

Neglect

Withholding food, water, shelter

15.) The church will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. In addition, the church will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

Physical Bullying: When one person engages in physical force against another person, such as hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining each other

Verbal Bullying: When someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.

Nonverbal or Relational Bullying: When one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures

CODE OF CONDUCT [CONT.]:

15.) The church will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth by another youth. In addition, the church will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

Cyberbullying:

The intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group
- Hazing: An activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate
- Sexualized Bullying: When bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all students, staff, and volunteers.

CODE OF CONDUCT [CONT.]:

16.) All staff must follow Florida specific mandatory reporting requirements. Although volunteers are not necessarily mandated reporters under the law (depending on the circumstances), volunteers must still immediately report suspected child abuse to a supervisor.

Staff will:

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse
- Know and follow church policies & procedures that protect minors against abuse
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by Florida mandated reporter laws.

17.) The church cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any staff or volunteer shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the church or persons given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination or removal from service.

18.) Staff and volunteers may not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of youth abuse, indecency with a youth, or injury to a youth. If a staff member has engaged in such conduct and has not been brought it to the church's attention, said staff member must notify his or her supervisor immediately. Exceptions may be made for individuals accused of such conduct if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- (1) the individual was not convicted for such conduct;
- (2) there is no civil action or criminal charges pending, nor is there an investigation pending against the individual by a law enforcement or government agency;
- (3) the exception is approved by the Youth Pastor,

POLICIES

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to young people, when staff know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

The church's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing, environment while protecting minors and staff. The church encourages appropriate physical contact with children and students and prohibits in appropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteers towards young people in the church's programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or removal from service.

The church policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS

- Side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, shoulders or arms
- Arms around the shoulders

INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS

- Full-frontal hugs
- Kisses
- Showing affection in isolated area
- Lap sitting
- Wrestling
- Piggyback rides
- Tickling
- Any type of massage given by or to a child
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the student or staff or volunteer
- Compliments relating to physique or body development
- Touching chest or genital areas

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to minors in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with students. Staff and volunteers are NOT permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with minors.

The church policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

APPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

INAPPROPRIATE VERBAL INTERACTIONS

- Name-calling
- Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children or students in the personal problems or issues staff or volunteers
- Secrets
- Cursing
- Sexual jokes
- Shaming / Belittling
- Derogatory remarks
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate students
- Derogatory remarks about a student's family

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a minor. The church aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the church staff.

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, staff should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

The church policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

APPROPRIATE GUIDELINES FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

- When meeting one-on-one with a minor, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes
- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by
- Inform staff that you are alone with a student and ask them to randomly drop in
- Document and immediately report to your immediate supervisor any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS INVOLVING DISCIPLESHIP & SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

One-on-One situations, such as discipleship and spiritual development sessions, introduce additional risks for false allegations. Staff and volunteers should be aware of our policies regarding discipleship and spiritual development:

- Staff and volunteers must have prior supervisor approval for any discipleship and spiritual development meetings**
- Supervisors must keep a schedule of discipleship and spiritual development sessions, which should include times, students involved, and location of sessions**
- Parents/guardians must be informed and in agreement about the sessions scheduled and the person leading the sessions**

Most cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. Let's do all we can to avoid these situations.

APPROPRIATE OUTSIDE CONTACT

- Taking groups of students on an outing with at least 3 people**
- Attending sporting activities with groups of students**
- Attending functions at a student's home with a parent/guardian present**

INAPPROPRIATE OUTSIDE CONTACT

- Taking one student on an outing without a parent's permission**
- Visiting one student in the student's home without a parent/guardian present**
- Entertaining one student in the home of a staff member**
- Spending the night with a staff member. Sleepovers are strictly prohibited unless organized by the church for a group activity with 2 or more leaders present.**

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Any private electronic communication between church staff and minors, including the use of social networking websites like: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. has strict guidelines

All communication between staff and minors must be transparent.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

APPROPRIATE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

-Conversations via text messaging that are transparent ((preferably group conversations). Such messages are not to be deleted and are to be made available for inspection by a supervisor at any time upon request

-Use of social media such as Facebook and Instagram for public conversation OR in groups

INAPPROPRIATE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

-Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments

-Sexually oriented conversation

-Posting pictures of students on social media or websites without executed releases by the student's parent/guardian

-"Friending" students on social media sites or apps that delete or do not save the communication (Snapchat)

CELL PHONE USE

While assigned to work with minors, staff are discouraged from using an electronic communications device *except* if approved by the supervisor for a specific purpose, during approved breaks, emergency situations, or is required as part of a job duty or task assignment.

Internet use, text messaging, and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with minors is discouraged regardless of whether for business or personal reasons. Staff needs to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy.

GIFT GIVING

Molesters routinely groom minors by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the minor. They might instruct the minor to keep the gift a secret, which then starts teaching the minor to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, staff and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of minors, and only under the following circumstances:

- 1.) Supervisors must be made aware of and approve the gift
- 2.) Parents must be notified

RESPONDING TO SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS OR POLICY VIOLATIONS

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the harm to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once a staff member, volunteer, minor, or parent has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a minor, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to minors, to the accused staff member, and to the church.

Because the church is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every staff member and volunteer actively participates in the protection of minors.

EXAMPLES OF SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS BETWEEN STAFF/VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS

-Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above

-Picking favorites

-Seeking private time with students

-Making suggestive comments to students

-Buying gifts for individual students

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF/VOLUNTEERS RESPONSE TO SUSPICIOUS/INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- Interrupt the behavior
- Report the behavior
- If the report is about a supervisor, contact the next level of management
- Document the report but do not conduct an investigation
- Keep reporting until appropriate action is taken

GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

- Review the need for increased supervision
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- Review the need for additional training

AGREEMENT TO YOUTH FOR THE ONE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

In response to the information stated in this Handbook,

I _____ [print name] agree to take every precaution to ensure safety for all students, volunteers and staff members at Youth For The One.

Signature: _____

Date: