

YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Supervision of Students

The youth ministry staff and volunteers are responsible for the supervision of students during ministry activities, including observing the environment and equipment for unsafe situations, removing students from potentially dangerous conditions, and reporting problems immediately. Ministry staff should ensure that anyone who has not been screened and approved for ministry service does not have unsupervised access to students. Supervision of students will be guided by the two-adult rule described in the next section.

Parents are responsible for their children until the time the activity is scheduled to begin and after the activity's scheduled ending time. Activity leaders are responsible for publicizing activity times. When students arrive to any church ministry or program, they are expected to remain in that program until the program ends and supervision is transferred back to parents. Students may not leave the program early without parental permission communicated to youth ministry staff and/or volunteers. A student's failure to follow this policy will be considered unacceptable behavior, and discipline policies will be enforced (see separate section on student discipline).

Youth ministry leaders are not responsible for students who do not show up at a ministry activity, even if a parent believes they are at the activity. Parents are welcome to ask youth ministry staff about the attendance of their child at ministry activities, including one-on-one mentoring meetings. Providing attendance information to parents is not considered a breach of confidentiality.

When participating in on-campus activities, junior and senior high students may use the restrooms without an escort, as long as they inform an adult leader where they are going. That leader should watch to ensure they return.

The Two-Adult Rule

The two-adult rule states that there must always be two non-related adults present when supervising one or more students. This rule is designed for the safety of adults as well as minors, and is required across all ministry areas with few exceptions (see guidelines for these cases below). Compliance to the two-adult rule includes the following:

- There must always be two adults present when supervising one or more students.
- The adults must not be related family members (a married couple would be considered "related")
- The adults should be in sight of each other at all times.

Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule

The purpose of the two-adult rule is to ensure the actions of any one leader are known to at least one other leader and to support leaders in ministry. Guidelines for exceptions to the two-adult rule follow this intent—that even when only one leader is present, the actions of that leader are known and visible to others. This is accomplished by the adult choosing to be in visible and public locations, and by communication with other ministry staff.

The Two-Adult Rule (continued)

Breakout Rooms

Some ministries use breakout rooms for small group times. There may be times when a room will only accommodate one small group at a time. When this occurs, windows should be unobstructed (curtains or blinds open) AND the door left open. The small group leader should place him/herself in visible sight of the hallway/entrance so that they may be seen from outside the room. An adult leader should periodically walk by the breakout rooms to ensure these policies are in effect.

One-on-One Mentoring Meetings

One-on-one meetings between students and screened advisors are an important part of ministries with junior and senior high students. The following guidelines should be followed:

- **Visible Location**--Meetings should take place in a visible area in a public place (e.g., coffee shop, restaurant, visible park area). Adult leaders should never meet with a student in a private home unless the student's parent or another screened adult is in the home and can view the adult and student at any time. The location should be within a couple miles of the church or the student's home or school (i.e., advisors should not be planning one-on-one meetings at the beach or other destinations outside the local community)
- **Driving Students**—Adult leaders may drive students to and from meetings if they inform their supervisor of this arrangement in advance (see below) and they adhere to the guidelines listed in “Driving Students” under “Off-Campus Activities.”
- **Parent permission**
Students in Junior High—Parent permission must be obtained for any one-on-one meeting with students in junior high. Advisors need parental permission each time they meet with students regarding when and where the meeting will take place and how students will get to and from the meeting.

Students in Senior High—At the beginning of each school year and when students enter the program mid-year, parents will be informed that advisors may occasionally meet with students one-on-one. Parents will be asked to provide their signature to indicate they have been informed of this and other policies and procedures. If Youth Ministry has signed permission, the parent does not need to be notified of specific meetings; however, the youth director must be notified (see below). If the ministry area does not have signed parent permission, then parent permission must be obtained for any specific meeting between the advisor and student.

One-on-One Mentoring Meetings (continued)

- ***Inform supervisor of meetings***—Before meeting with a student, the following information should be provided by the advisor to the youth director (or designee):
 - Name of student
 - Date and time of meeting
 - Location
 - Whether the student will be driven by the adult leader
 - Names of any other youth or adults who will be attending
 - For students in junior high, how parental permission was obtained

Unplanned Situations with Only One Adult

Occasionally, leaders will find themselves without another adult present due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed.

- ***Immediately inform supervisor***--In these cases, the adult leader should immediately inform his/her supervisor or the supervisor's designee (by cell phone or text message) about the situation, including information about where they are and who is present. The supervisor or designee will advise the adult leader about what to do (e.g., cancel the activity, proceed with the activity, notify parents). The adult leader should also immediately contact the supervisor or designee if a second adult leader arrives or when the students have been released from the activity to their parents.
- ***Visible location***--Any time there is only one adult present, the group must be in a visible public location with an unobstructed window or open door if indoors.
- ***Multiple students present***—A leader should not be alone with one student (except in prearranged mentoring meetings described above). If multiple students are present (e.g., 3 or more), this is acceptable in some cases, although the supervisor should still be consulted about how to proceed. If a leader finds him/herself alone with a student for a ministry activity, the activity should be canceled and the parent notified.

Youth Serving as Leaders

We encourage senior high school students to serve as leaders for students in younger grades. A youth leader may count as an adult under the Two-Adult Rule if a non-related adult who is at least 18 and out of high school is also present. It is preferable for the second adult to be a more experienced person who can mentor the youth leader. Two youth leaders serving without any other adults present would not satisfy the two-adult rule. Youth serving as leaders for younger students will participate in youth leadership training regarding the protection of children.

Youth Discipline Policy

In this environment, discipline is defined as training provided to develop or improve a skill or behavior. The focus of discipline is on the future and on growth. It is done in love and concern and is not designed to create fear or guilt. The number one rule in ministry with students is that everyone should be treated with the kind of respect, love, and support to which scripture calls us.

Clear rules, expectations and consistent messages about behavior are the key to effective discipline procedures. Occasionally students have trouble following the rules or display disruptive behavior. In these cases, the following steps should be taken.

Discipline for minor offenses

1. The leader should talk with the student and state clearly what the problem behavior is and what the student should do instead.
2. If the student continues to exhibit problem behavior, the leader should give a warning to the student.
3. If the problem behavior continues, the student should be removed from the activity (but remain visible to the leaders). Sometimes a short “time out” is all that is needed. The student should be warned at this point that further disruptive or inappropriate behavior will result in contact with the student’s parent(s).
4. The final step with problem behavior is contacting parents to inform them that the student may not continue participation in the event and to determine how supervision will be transferred back to the parent. In most cases, the student will be welcomed back at the next ministry activity.

Zero Tolerance

There will be zero tolerance for severe or illegal behavior such as assaults, weapons in possession, theft, destruction of property, sexual activity, or any other behavior that could put students or others in danger. For these types of offenses the procedures will be:

1. Immediate removal of the student from the ministry activity and personal family contact by the youth director or a pastor.
2. If the offense is an illegal activity, the police will be contacted.
3. The student may be suspended from ministry activities for an amount of time determined by the youth director or pastor.
4. The student and family will be treated with respect and love, and the student will be welcomed back to ministry activities after the suspension period or when it is determined that he/she is ready to respect the rules of the ministry.

Physical Contact between Leaders and Students

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between youth ministry leaders and students. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate. Ministry leaders and volunteers should avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Some **positive** and **appropriate** forms of affection for youth are listed below:

- Brief hugs or side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes, high-fives, hand slapping, fist bumps
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, shoulders or arms of youth.
- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands during group prayer

The following forms of affection are considered **inappropriate** with youth in a ministry setting. It should be noted that many of these behaviors are used by offenders to groom youth and their parents for later molestation and can be construed as sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses
- Sitting on laps
- Touching, other than noted above
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a youth
- Wrestling or Tickling
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a youth to an adult or adult to a youth
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples: “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing
- Giving gifts or money to individual youth
- Private meals with individual youth (outside mentoring relationships described on page 4).

Communication Outside of Ministry Activities

Only individuals who are approved advisors for Youth Ministry should be communicating with students outside of ministry activities. Individuals not approved for this specific role should limit communication to sharing program information through phone calls to the home phone (not the student’s cell phone), emails to students and parents, and written information sent to the home.

As part of developing caring relationships with students, screened youth advisors are encouraged to contact students outside of ministry activities. Advisors’ primary role in relational ministry is as spiritual caregiver, the one who listens and supports. Accordingly, communications with students should primarily be about listening, supporting, and encouraging students in their faith, life, and participation in youth ministry activities. Advisors should seek the advice of the youth director or a pastor when they have questions or concerns about communications with students.

Communication Outside of Ministry Activities (continued)

Parental Permission

- **Students in Junior High**—Parents must be informed about any contact with students in junior high and give their consent. For email contact, parents should be copied on the email.
- **Students in Senior High**—At the beginning of each school year and when students enter the program mid-year, parents will be informed that advisors may contact students outside of ministry activities. Parents will be asked to indicate that they have been informed of this and other policies and practices by providing their signature. If the ministry area has not obtained written parental consent, the advisor should obtain parent permission before the first individual contact. Once parent permission is given, the youth advisor may communicate directly with the student. In special circumstances where individual contact may benefit a student and parent permission has not been obtained, the youth advisor should consult with the youth director about how the youth can be supported.

Safety in Communications

The guiding principle for contact with students is transparency--communication should be visible to others or documented. The youth director will periodically review youth advisors' records of communication. The youth advisors are responsible for providing records of communication to the youth director. The following chart provides examples of how different types of communications can be made visible.

COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS	
Mode	Ways to make contacts visible, documented
Phone	If parent answers, identify yourself and the reason for your call "This is Mary, one of the youth advisors. I'd like to talk to Joe about tonight's program." Document calls (date, length of call, recipient) Advisors may email call updates to youth director
Written note/letter	Postcard (visible) or keep a photocopy of a note/card
Email	Copy youth director or save copies
Social Networking Site	Public messages or document private messages via a print out or a cc:
Text Message	Save messages

Off Campus Trips or Activities

The two-adult rule should be followed during all off campus activities. One exception is when students are being transported in vehicles (see procedures under Driving Students). For unplanned situations where only one adult is present with students, the procedures outlined above under Unplanned Situations with Only One Adult should be followed. For example, during off campus trips, sometimes a student or advisor needs to break off from the main group for some need. If only one adult can break off the main group, he or she should take several students, not one, even if it's only one student who has the need to leave the main group.

The nature of some off-campus activities requires students to be without direct adult supervision for some of the time (e.g., ski trips). In these cases, students should always be in at least pairs (never alone), they should be told how to reach a ministry leader, and they should be given clear instructions about geographic and time boundaries.

Emergency Forms

Students are required to fill out an Emergency Form with included liability waiver for each year they participate in Youth Ministry programs at Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church.

Local Activities (those within 10 miles of the church). All students participating in local off-campus activities must provide emergency contact information to the youth director. Completed emergency forms are sufficient for students who have those on file for the current program year. Students who do not have emergency forms on file with the ministry area must provide their parent's phone number and any other emergency information.

Distant Activities—For all activities occurring more than 10 miles away from the church campus, students may only participate if they have completed and turned in emergency forms for the current year, including parent signatures. Ministry leaders should always have a copy of these forms with them on off-campus trips.

Driving Students

Anyone driving students for ministry activities, including one-on-one mentoring meetings, must be at least 21 years old and have had a driver's license for at least 3 years. Drivers must provide a copy of their driver's license, insurance and vehicle information to the youth director. Drivers who drive on overnight trips must be placed in the DMV Pull Program (the church office can be contacted for more specific information).

Overnight Events

In addition to the requirements listed above for any off-campus activity more than 10 miles away, parents/guardians must provide written permission for students to participate in specific overnight and/or off-campus trips. Whether an on-campus sleepover or an off-campus trip, male and female students must sleep in separate rooms with adult leaders of the same gender, or separate sides of one large room with adult leaders between the two sides. Ministry leaders will make sure that students do not enter the sleeping quarters of students from the opposite gender. Students and adults are required to wear modest sleep attire.

Relationships

A leader may not date a student under any circumstances, with one exception: If a leader is a high school student, this leader may date another high school student. A high school leader of junior high activities may not date a junior high student. When the leader becomes a non-high school student (through graduation or other means) either the dating relationship is to be put on hold or the leader shall step down from the leadership role until such time that both members of the couple are no longer high school students.

Respond and Report

If a student or leader shares information about possible abuse, the advisor will listen carefully, respectfully, and lovingly and treat this information seriously and confidentially. Regardless of whether the student has given permission to share this information, it should be reported to the youth director immediately.

All youth ministry staff and volunteers are expected to report any suspicious, careless, or problematic behavior of adult or youth leaders to the youth director. It is very important that any and all signs or behaviors of suspected abuse be reported. The youth director will decide how to proceed or will consult with church staff members about how to respond. In addition, it is appropriate to report incidences in a staff member or volunteer's personal life that could affect the safety of students. Staff members and volunteers are encouraged to seek the support of a pastor, staff member, or other professional or lay person as needed to deal with personal crises and issues.

Concerns about suspected or actual child abuse or the behaviors of leaders and volunteers should be shared only with the youth director and those directly involved in the reporting process (e.g., church staff members, Child Protective Services) and not with anyone else.

Emergencies and Injuries

Ministry staff and volunteers should be prepared to protect minors in the case of emergencies. Youth leaders should have the following phone numbers programmed into their cell phones. Note that 911 calls by cell phones are often not as direct as dialing the local emergency authorities.

Sunnyvale Emergency: 408-736-6244 or 911

Church Office: 408-739-1892 (business hours are 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)

EMQ (Eastfield Ming Quong) crisis line: 408-375-9085

Medical Supplies

A number of basic medical supplies are located in the closet in the men's room in the narthex of the sanctuary, and an AED is located in the church office. First aid kits are stored in the Youth Room closet. For medical problems that you cannot handle, call the church office during business hours or call 911 or local emergency phone number.

Threats of Violence against Others or Harm to Self

Youth ministry leaders may receive information that a student or other person has thoughts or desires to harm themselves or others. This information should be taken seriously and should be reported **immediately** to the youth director or a pastor. If the student seems to have the imminent intent to do harm, a leader or volunteer should stay with the student, and 911 or the Eastfield Ming Quan (EMQ) crisis line should be contacted.

Criminal or Potentially Dangerous Activity

911 or local emergency number should be called immediately in cases of suspected criminal or dangerous activities on the church campus or near ministry activities.

Earthquake or Other Disaster

See *Earthquake Procedures* posted in classrooms.