

Children's Ministry & Youth Group policies

Vision & Mission

At the baptism of each of our children, we the congregation of members are asked: Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child? These guidelines are designed to help us in this as we create a safe and nurturing environment in which our children and youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and where we can walk alongside parents in helping teach their children to understand and experience the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Training & Screening process
 - a. All staff and volunteers will submit the CM or YG form, a face to face interview and have references checked.
 - i. All volunteers must be a member or have attended the church for a year before they can volunteer in either CM or YG
 - b. All staff and volunteers will under go a criminal background check (including Child Abuse Clearance, FBI fingerprinting, and Pennsylvania Criminal History).
 - c. All staff and volunteers are required to attend training on abuse, signs of abuse and grooming behavior, and how to report any abuse and suspicions.
 - d. Staff and volunteers will be given a copy of these policies to read, sign and return.
2. Youth Safety Policy
 - a. Our church has **zero tolerance for abuse**. This is especially true in programs for our children and youth. Abuse may include:
 - i. Neglect - Any repeated, prolonged, or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's age, development, or functioning and the failure to provide the essentials of life, including food, shelter, or medical care.
 - ii. Physical Abuse - Any physical act or failure to act that causes bodily injury to a child. This includes unreasonably restraining a child, interfering with the breathing of a child, causing the death of a child.
 - iii. Sexual Abuse - Any act that is sexual in nature, exposing a child or youth to pornographic material, leaving the child unsupervised with an individual with a history of sexual delinquency, engaging the child in sex trafficking or prostitution. Any use of persuasion, enticement, or coercion of a child or youth to engage in or assist another to engage in sexually explicit conduct.
 - iv. Emotional Abuse - Words, actions and/or indifference that endanger the child's mental health or emotional development, psyche and self concept.
 - v. Spiritual Abuse - When spiritual authority is misused to manipulate people's emotions, actions or loyalty for the benefit of the authority in question.
 - vi. *This list is not exhaustive. Any act or failure to act that causes serious bodily or mental injurt to a child or youth may constitute child abuse under PA law.*
 - b. Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse
 - i. All employees and leadership in CM and YG will have up to date mandated reporter certification. We expect them to follow all state mandated guidelines when it comes to reporting any abuse or suspected abuse to Child Line.

1. Abuse may be witnessed, disclosed by a child or youth, consistent indicators, perpetrator's disclosure and rumors.
 2. After a report has been made, if the incident occurred at church or a church sanctioned function, we ask that the reporter alert the Children's Ministry or Youth Group Director, or if they are the offending party, to notify the Executive Pastor, so that the church can notify parents and also take appropriate steps to safeguard the child.
 - ii. All employees and leadership in CM and YG are expected to have Child Line saved in their phones
 - iii. Teachers and volunteers, though they are not required to be mandated reporters, are encouraged to report suspected abuse themselves to Child Line (1-800-932-0313). If they are unsure of the reporting process, they can speak to the leaders and report it together.
- c. Classroom Safety
 - i. In any Renewal event for CM or YG, there will be at least two teachers/volunteers/staff on site.
 1. If a classroom teacher is absent and only one teacher is in a classroom, the door to that classroom will be left open at all times.
 2. No adult should be alone with youth or children without another adult present.
 3. Should there not be another adult available, meetings should be held in a public space where meetings can be interruptible.
 - ii. Bathrooms
 1. If a child cannot go alone, take the entire class to go to the bathroom at once.
 2. Never enter a bathroom stall unless necessary.
 3. No adult or older youth should be alone in a bathroom with a younger person.
- d. Cell Phones & Communication
 - i. Staff and volunteers are expected to have their phones out of sight and on silent during their shifts.
 - ii. No photos of children and youth should be taken by volunteers without parents' consent and the consent of the child.
 - iii. Do not use, post or distribute photos of children and youth without explicit parental consent *and* the consent of the child.
 - iv. Communications with youth
 1. No electronic communication should be hidden between youth and adults. Video chat/messaging/texting/phone calls/social media interaction/multiplayer video games should primarily be done in public (e.g. in groups or within earshot) and kept to light content. Individual messaging or texting is allowed, but may be reviewed by other staff or parents at any time.

- v. Social Media - Staff and volunteers are not prohibited from interacting with the children and youth on social media, but should exercise caution and keep interactions light.
 - e. Drugs & Alcohol
 - i. Our church and any church sponsored event is drug and alcohol free. No staff or volunteer shall be under the influence while at the church building or while acting as a representative of the church.
 - 1. If a youth shows up and seems to be intoxicated, parents will be contacted immediately and the youth will be asked to return home.
 - ii. Tobacco products should not be used at church events or in the presence of children and youth.
 - f. Transportation
 - i. All drivers should be over the age of 21 and will need to have their driver's license and insurance coverage on file.
 - ii. All children will be in carseats appropriate for their age, weight and height.
 - iii. Adult drivers should never be alone in a car with a youth or child.
 - g. Retreats
 - i. All retreats involving youth and children will have at least two staff/volunteers of each gender on hand.
 - ii. Sleeping arrangements will be such that no child or adult is alone in a room. Rooms will be single gender and, if there are multiple rooms per gender, divided by age.
 - iii. Free time will be spent together with the Youth Group unless youth are with their family. Youth must inform YG staff if they are with their parents.
3. Discipline
- a. We believe that the primary role of discipline belongs to the parents, but there will be times when discipline is needed during church sanctioned events. When a child or youth misbehaves, they are offered up to three warnings, explaining that their behavior is inappropriate. If by the third warning they have not changed their behavior, the child/youth will be asked if they need to “reflect and recharge” or take some time to themselves to calm down, play with toys and books on their own, and reflect on their choices. If after that, the child keeps disrupting and not listening, the parent is asked to come get the child.
 - i. Stay calm, seek help if needed.
 - ii. Never hit, push, pull or forcibly restrain a child or youth.
 - iii. Never isolate a child in a place without proper adult supervision
 - iv. Avoid shaming the child publicly when you can take them aside
 - b. If the problem persists, speak with the CM or YG director or with the parents directly to work toward a solution as a team.
 - i. If behavior is especially disruptive, parents or guardians will be asked to pick up their child for the remainder of the event.
4. Teacher & Volunteer expectations
- a. Attendance

- i. Teachers are expected to arrive on time for all their scheduled shifts. If serving in Sunday School, please arrive 60 minutes before service begins to attend the prep & prayer meeting.
 - ii. Teacher preparation is essential for Children's Ministry teaching. Please read over your lesson during the week. Give yourself some time to pray and become familiar with any stories, questions, and planning of activities covered in the lesson.
 - iii. If you cannot attend, please contact the CM or YG Director and your co-teacher as soon as possible to let them know of your absence and reason. If you know you will be absent ahead of time, please notify this when you are aware of it.
- b. Facilities
- i. The Church building and vans should be used in a way that models and promotes our churches vision and mission. Please see the [Building Use Policy](#) for specific details.
 1. After any event, it is the responsibility of the volunteers and staff to clean the church buildings. We encourage the children and youth to take part in this responsibility as well, but it is up to the leaders and staff to assure that everything is done.
 - ii. After Sunday School class ends, make sure all materials are picked up off the floor, toys are wiped (if necessary) and the room is tidy. Return unused craft supplies to the cabinet from which it was taken.
 - iii. Please contact the Director if there is a need for any supplies or issues with the facility.