



Suggested Youth Ministry Policy

The purpose of this policy is to assure a safe environment for children, protect the reputation of people in youth ministry, and shield your church against liability. These policy guidelines are necessary due to relevant laws, court rulings, and insurance recommendations.

1. Do not be alone with a student unless you are in full view or within hearing of others.
As much as possible there should be three people present for any interaction.
No counseling alone with a person of the opposite sex.
Paid church staff may infrequently conduct a counseling session with a person of the opposite sex in the office with a secretary present in the next room and with either a window into the counseling room or door partially open at all times
No working alone on projects or music with a person of the opposite sex.
2. Be careful about riding alone in a car with any student, especially one of the opposite sex.
If dropping kids off it's a good idea if you have one of your own kids still in the car if possible.
Student activities should end no later than 10:00 PM unless parents have been notified otherwise.
Drivers for student events and trips must be over 21, licensed, and their vehicle insured for 100,00/300,000/50,000. A signed insurance statement to that effect should be on file in the church office. Qualified van drivers should also have a copy of their drivers license in the office. Avoid borrowing vehicles for trips if possible.
3. A signed parental permission form/medical release must be on file before a student can go on any extracurricular activity. Copies of the form should be carried by the leader for emergency use.
See the sample form on the web site for particulars.
At least one adult of each gender must accompany an overnight trip when both boys and girls are present.
4. Try not to focus on certain kids, for whatever reason, in youth group any more than any other. Teens pick up on your "favorites" and the last thing you want is teens or adults thinking you "favor" a certain girl, girls, or boy.
5. When sending cards or letters to individual students it's best to leave the envelope open, then put it in another envelope addressed to the parent so the parent can read and approve the communication.
6. Avoid personal e-mails with students. If one is received we suggest sending a blind-copy of your reply to an "accountability partner". Both of you should make a copy of the e-mail and keep it on file.
7. Your behavior with anyone of the opposite sex at church functions or in private should be above reproach:
Avoid kissing on the lips or full body hugs.
Do not talk with a person of the opposite sex about marital problems.
No flirting. Keep your interaction with others free of tasteless comments and innuendo.
If your spouse is uncomfortable with anything you are doing -stop immediately.
Although cultural lines have been blurred between marriage and cohabitation, the Bible's lines are clear (1 Timothy 3:1-13; James 3:1) A person in leadership or teaching in the church should not be in a living situation with someone of the opposite sex unless they are married.
8. Never enter the home of a teen without parental supervision.

Confidentiality: Students frequently confide in Youth Leaders. Kids feel safe telling you things they might not want their parents to know or would be terribly embarrassed if the other kids knew. Their trust in your confidentiality is very important to your relationship with them and your ability to help them through tough times. You might find it helpful to discuss situations with your "accountability partner" but no further than that. However, there are certain instances when you must, by law, report what you've been told to authorities. These instances would be; any form of abuse, sexual, physical, or emotional, and neglect, exposure to meth production, pregnancy or VD in kids under the age of 12. If the student is in a current state of danger you must act to protect them. I suggest bringing your concerns to the senior pastor and both of you contact the authorities. Here's a web-link of the copy of the law: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-238-of-1975.pdf>

Note: **Accountability Partner:** Every Youth Pastor or youth leader should have an accountability partner. This should be a mature person you feel comfortable with who is trustworthy, and exhibits wisdom and confidentiality. They do not need to be a member of the same church or live nearby but you must be able to share everything with them.