



2023 POLICIES & PROCEDURES

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Community Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, Community Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Student Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working within the Student Ministry:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or Leaders and students are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are prohibited . Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a Community Church Staff member.
3. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or staff members and Leaders. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
4. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff or Leaders in the Student Ministry must always foster trust. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
5. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
6. Staff members and Leaders are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
7. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the Directional Leader of Student Ministry.

Community Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. For groups up to and including 8 students, there will be at least 1 staff member or volunteer supervising. For groups ranging from 9 to 20 students, there will be at least 2 staff members or volunteers supervising. For groups larger than 20 students, there will be at least 3 staff members or volunteers supervising. For mixed gender student groups, we will attempt to have both male and female volunteers present.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and Leaders are not permitted to discuss with any student any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or

sexual activities. However, it is expected that from time to time student ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will occur in group settings. Leaders may have conversations with students about these as long as the student is the same gender as the leader and another adult is present.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and Leaders are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to any student) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films, etc.), including those in electronic form, at any time. This is grounds for immediate removal from the Student Ministry.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between Leaders and students should be positive and uplifting. Community Church staff members and Leaders should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of students. To this end, staff members and Leaders should not talk to students in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and Leaders are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of students.

INTOXICANTS AND TOBACCO

Staff members and Leaders are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, prescription or illicit drugs while in any church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising students. In addition, staff members and Leaders are to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in Church facilities, while in the presence of students or their parents, and during Church activities or programs.

Counseling Students

Community Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member and Leaders to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff members and Leaders should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Staff members and Leaders should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from the student's parent or guardian.

APPROPRIATE FORMS OF COUNSELING WITH A STUDENT

Leaders are permitted to offer counseling with students of their same gender on general topics such as spiritual disciplines, their relationship with God, advice on how to handle conflict, relationship advice with parents and friends or common struggles with sin. Leaders should refer students to speak to their parents about seeing a professional counselor when the issue is beyond the Leader's expertise. They should also inform the Directional Leader of Student Ministry if they feel that the DL's knowledge of this information would help the ministry know how to best support the student and their family. Topics that go beyond common sexual temptations (e.g. temptations in dating, content watched on screens, etc.), or beyond common experiences of depression/anxiety should be discussed with a professional. Additionally, thoughts of suicide or mental health should be discussed with a professional. A Leader should never agree to keep any information secret from the Directional Leader or the student's parents.

Communication with Students

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

GENERAL POLICIES THROUGH ELECTRONIC AND SOCIAL MEDIA

These policies apply to communications with any student through High School, even if the student has already attained the age of majority (18).

As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication with a Student should be readily available to share with the DL of Student Ministry and Pastor and/or the Student's parents or guardians. All electronic communications must be preserved and shall not be deleted. Whenever possible, communications with students should be done as group messages. Group messages should be the norm and individual messages the exception.

Whenever individual communication does occur between Students and Leaders it will be for the purposes of the Student Ministry and the benefit of the Student (e.g. event information, encouragement, discipleship, etc.). We do not permit staff or Leaders to transmit or receive any electronic content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful.

We also understand that the Student Ministry can't guarantee that all minors participating in youth activities will abide by the policy's terms. However, the Student Ministry will seek to enforce the policy's terms to the best of its ability.

Where individual communications are warranted, communication between a student and a Leader of the same gender is encouraged. However, it is understood that there will be rare cases where students or Leaders may contact someone from the opposite

gender (questions about events, responsibilities, etc.). Never delete texts. This is for your own protection.

When engaging online or on Social Media, Leaders are not permitted to post inappropriate/off-color content or comment on inappropriate/off-color posts. Posts including crude humor, inappropriate comments, inflammatory or derogatory posts, or sexual content will not be tolerated. If there is doubt, then treat it as inappropriate.

If a student opposite the Leader's gender initiates a text message, Direct Message, email or other form of communication to the leader, the Leader should redirect the messages in a group text – either with the DL of Student Ministry or another ministry Leader.

AUTO-DELETE MESSAGING APPS

The use of auto-delete messaging apps such as Snapchat, or any method of communication in which a record of the communication is not kept, with students is not permitted by Community Church. This is for your own protection.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Telephone calls with students are allowed. However, if phone calls with students of opposite sex become frequent or personal, Leaders should direct the student to a Leader of the same gender as the student. This will prevent phone conversations and relationship between student and Leader from becoming inappropriate.

Traveling and Overnights with Students

GENERAL POLICIES

Whenever the Student Ministry travels there is a high priority on accountability and having enough sponsors and Leaders. Students need to have a current Medical Release turned in to the Church in the case of an emergency. Parents need to include any pertinent medical history or medical needs (e.g. medication schedules) on the Medical Release form.

Whenever we travel, students and Leaders may stay in the same room only if there is always more than 1 adult present in the room with students. A Leader should never be in the room alone with a student. In the instance that we only have one adult sponsor, we will have them sleep in their own quarters. Leaders will not share a bed with another student. Exceptions will be made if the adult leader is also the parent of the student, they are sharing a room with.

CHANGING CLOTHES

Staff and Leaders should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. If the need to change clothes arise, they need to be behind a closed door and not during a time when students may walk in the room.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, camps, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and Leaders will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The 2-adult rule must be followed; a single student should not be alone (out-of-sight) with a staff member or Leader.
2. All adult Leaders attending the activity must have previously completed the Church's screening and training process.
3. Whenever any students are awake, one or more trip Leader must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
4. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
5. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by Leaders of the same gender.
6. If overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, Leader, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed. [L]
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TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and Leaders may from time to time be able to provide transportation for students. Whenever cases arise where a student may be riding with an adult who is not his or her parent, the parents of the student will be contacted, and permission will be requested from the parents to transport the student after they have been informed of the details of the travel. Leaders must obtain a text or email from the parent indicating the parents' permission to transport the student. This is for the protection of the Leader.

The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of students:

1. There shall be no transportation of one student by a Leader of the opposite gender. If Leader is transporting a student of opposite gender, other student(s) or Leaders must be in the vehicle as well.

2. Staff members and Leaders should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.

Parent Involvement

Community Church is dedicated to partnering with parents in their role to make disciples among their students. Part of our commitment in this is making sure parents feel secure when entrusting their children to us. As a Leader, part of your responsibility is to build trust between the Student Ministry staff and Leaders, as well as between the students and their parents. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Student Ministry programs or overnight activities will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

PARENTAL CONTACT IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES

Parents whose student is participating in Community Church's Student Ministry activities and programs will be contacted if their child becomes severely ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Student Ministry programs.

Policies on Abuse

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Community Church has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Community Church to act in the best interest of students in every program.

If any staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behavior (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual), it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report these observations to the Directional Leader of Student Ministry, Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Executive Director.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Community Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for students and their families. Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or the Police.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a student for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations,

or any suspicious behaviors to the Directional Leader of Student Ministry, Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Executive Director.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Community Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all policies held by Community Church. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Student Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Directional Leader of Student Ministry, Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor, and/or Executive Director.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the Directional Leader of Student Ministry, Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor, or Executive Director.

All Staff, leaders and volunteers should refer to the Child and Youth Abuse Reporting Guidelines and Procedures which are part of this Policy Manual.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Student Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Community Church. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Community Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children or students at Community Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members, Leaders and volunteers at Community Church should report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a

colleague or co-worker, to the Directional Leader of Student Ministry, Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor, or Executive Director.

Staff members, Leaders and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a verbal report from a staff member, Leader or volunteer in Student Ministries, the DL of Student Ministry will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the student spoke to get detailed information about the entire conversation and to complete the written Child or Youth Abuse Report within 24 hours. If appropriate, the Directional Leader of Student Ministry will inform Child Protective Services or the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Mandatory Reporting and Report Inclusions

Oklahoma State law (10A O.S. 1-2-101) requires every person, private citizen or professional, who has reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is a victim of abuse or neglect, to immediately report the matter to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, at the statewide hotline (1-800-522-3511).

Church employees, Leaders and volunteers working with minors are mandated reporters within the state of Oklahoma. All staff and volunteers should report any suspicions to the leaders above them.

A Leader or volunteer should report to the Directional Leader of Student Ministry so supervisory personnel can make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. No provision in this policy is meant to discourage any staff member, Leaders or volunteer from personally reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE REPORTING GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

- To provide guidance for identifying and reporting suspected abuse involving any child between the ages of birth and 18 years of age.
- To comply with State and Federal laws requiring mandatory reporting of actual and reasonably suspected cases of child abuse.

POLICY

All staff members, pastors, Leaders and volunteers acting on behalf of Community Church are required to report both actual and suspected cases of child abuse to the proper authorities by following the procedures listed below. Staff members should be

familiar with reporting requirements that are required by the State of Oklahoma. Abuse includes harm already caused or harm that has been threatened to the child or youth.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT DEFINED

The current law in Oklahoma defines an "abused or neglected child" as any of the following:

Abuse

Under Oklahoma law, it is "harm or threatened harm to the health, safety, or welfare of a child by a person responsible for the child's health, safety, or welfare, including but not limited to nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation. Provided, however, that nothing contained in the Oklahoma Children's Code shall prohibit any parent from using ordinary force as a means of discipline including, but not limited to, spanking, switching, or paddling."

"Harm or threatened harm to the health or safety of a child" means any real or threatened physical, mental or emotional injury or damage to the body or mind that is not accidental including but not limited to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect or dependency.

"Sexual abuse" includes but is not limited to rape, incest, and lewd or indecent acts or proposals to a child, as defined by law, by a person responsible for the health, safety, or welfare of a child.

"Sexual exploitation" includes but is not limited to allowing, permitting, encouraging, or forcing a child to engage in prostitution, as defined by law, by any person eighteen (18) years of age or older or by a person responsible for the health, safety, or welfare of a child, or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the lewd, obscene, or pornographic, as defined by law, photographing, filming, or depicting of a child in those acts by a person responsible for the health, safety, and welfare of the child.

Neglect

Under Oklahoma law, it is...

1. The failure or omission to provide any of the following:
 - a. Adequate nurturance and affection, food, clothing, shelter, sanitation, hygiene, or appropriate education,
 - b. Medical, dental, or behavioral health care,
 - c. Supervision or appropriate caretakers, or
 - d. Special care made necessary by the physical or mental condition of the child
2. The failure or omission to protect a child from exposure to any of the following:
 - a. The use, possession, sale, or manufacture of illegal drugs,
 - b. Illegal activities, or
 - c. Sexual acts or materials that are not age-appropriate, or
3. Abandonment.

The following are some warning signs that abuse may have occurred:

- Unexplained injury, patch of hair missing, a burn or bruises on strange places (back of arms, stomach, back, etc.);
- Drawings in conjunction with statements from a child or youth;
- Prayer requests of protection from pain or injury from specific individuals;
- Statements from the child or youth;
- Complaints about numerous beatings;
- Consistent poor hygiene;
- Age inappropriate comments regarding sex or violence.

How to respond to a Child Disclosing Abuse

If you believe a child is a victim of PHYSICAL ABUSE, bring another Leader/adult into the conversations and ask some questions to get clarity.

- I notice that you have a big bruise on your arm. Tell me about that. How did that happen?
- If child says he was hit, move to closed-ended.
- Where did this happen? Who hit you?
- When did it happen? Has it happened before? When was the last time?
- What did you get hit with?
- Why did he/she hit you?

If you believe a child is a victim of SEXUAL ABUSE, bring another Leader/adult into the conversation and ask some questions to get clarity:

- It seems like you've been acting kind oflately, what's up?
- Is anyone making you do anything that you feel uncomfortable about?
- Sometimes people make kids do things that kids don't want to do. What do you think about that?
- Has anyone touched you there? (If yes) Tell me about the last time that happened.

If you believe a child is a victim of NEGLECT, bring another Leader/adult into the conversation and ask some questions to get clarity:

- Tell me about the last meal that you ate. When did you eat? Where did the food come from, and where did you eat it? What did you eat?
- How often do you feel hungry and don't have anything to eat?
- What happens in your house when you misbehave?

When responding to a Child Disclosing Abuse

- Listen;
- Be sensitive to vague disclosures;
- Avoid expressing shock or outrage;
- Don't threaten or condemn the alleged perpetrator;
- Let the child know that you believe him/her;
- Tell the victim that they were right to disclose;
- Assure the student that the abuse was not his/her fault;
- Reassure the victim that he/she will be safe;
- Get as many details as the child is comfortable disclosing;
- Write down exactly what happened;
- Follow authorized reporting procedures.

Failure to report actual suspected cases of child abuse can result in criminal and civil liability for the church, staff member, or volunteer that failed to report it. It is the staff member or volunteer's responsibility to report suspected abuse. It is not his or her responsibility to investigate and draw a conclusion as to whether or not abuse has actually occurred.

The following information is needed when reporting child abuse:

- Name of child;
- Age of child;
- Address of child;
- Parents or guardian of child;
- Alleged abuser's name and address;
- Nature of abuse.

All suspected cases of child abuse must be handled in a confidential manner. Communication of the suspected abuse should only be made with the staff member or authorities that are involved.

OTHER SITUATIONS REQUIRING LEADERS TO INFORM DL & PARENTS

While we try to protect confidentiality between Leaders & students, there are situations that require our Staff and Leaders to inform parents of risky behaviors. Leaders should never promise students that they'll keep information secret if it puts the student in a risky situation. Leaders in Student Ministry should inform the DL of Student Ministry if a student is engaged in behaviors that may harm the student or others. Leaders, if students disclose the following, please ask "Who else knows about this? Have you told your parents? Why or why not?" Within 24 hours of receiving this information, the DL of Student Ministry should inform parents of any behaviors that may harm the student or others.

- Student discloses they've been engaging in self-harm
- Student discloses their substance abuse
- Students discloses smoking/vaping with or without parents' knowledge
- Student discloses inappropriate relationship they have with an adult (regardless of whether it's welcomed by the student)
- Student discloses that they've been having sex with their boyfriend/girlfriend

Student Discloses Suicidal Thoughts (or you have concerns)

- *Talking Points:*
 - "Have you ever thought of attempting suicide? Do you have a plan?"
 - "Who else knows about this? Have you told your parents? Why or why not?"
 - "You can come to me and talk about suicide."
 - "Do you know anyone who has talked about suicide?"
 - "Do you know anyone who has attempted suicide?"
 - "What can I do to help? We are in this together!"
- Coach them towards health and safety. Reaffirm that you are glad they told you, that you want them here, and that they're going to get through this. Remind them of hope.

If a student has disclosed having suicidal thoughts, within 24 hours of disclosure Leaders should:

- Contact the DL of Student Ministry so they are made aware.
- Contact the parent(s) to make them aware. This is for the safety and protection of the student. The DL can make this call as well.

Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Community Church's Student Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Community Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Community Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Community Church Student Ministry Policies and Procedures manual.

_____ Leader or Volunteer's name (please print)

_____ Leader or Volunteer's signature

_____ Student Ministry Directional Leader Signature

Date: _____