
SECTION 3

Youth Ministry

Policies and Procedures

Classroom Volunteer Qualifications

Who is a volunteer?

In general terms, volunteers are anyone who is coming more than twice a month to youth classes or activities.

The following are required of all classroom volunteers in Youth Ministry:

- All classroom volunteers must be members of the church in good standing.
- All volunteers must strive to live a life of integrity and be of good character

The following are required of all lead teachers in Youth Ministry:

- A lead teacher must be a baptized believer.
- A lead teacher must be a Downtown member in good standing and approved by the youth ministers.

CORE Leader Qualifications

During the school year, our high school students are broken out into CORE groups (CORE stands for commit, obey, reach out, encourage). There are about 20 students of the same gender in 9th-12th grade with two or three adult volunteers serving as CORE Leaders in each group. The Jr. High acts as its own group with four or more CORE Leaders referred to as Jr. High Mentors. High school CORE groups meet weekly on Wednesday evenings and at additional times determined by each group. They also plan special activities such as weekend trips, parties, and service projects. CORE leaders organize these meetings and trips.

CORE Leaders must be members in good standing at Downtown, preferably with plans to settle in Searcy so that they can be a consistent presence in the lives of the students. They are usually recruited by the youth ministry staff and must be interviewed by the youth ministry staff. (Cont...)

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CORE Leader Qualifications (cont.)

They must fill out the background check information and sign the accompanying sheet verifying they have read and given their compliance to this document.

Additional details are given during CORE Leader orientation.

College Peer Qualifications

College students serve with our CORE groups during the school year. College student volunteers are placed within specific CORE groups to serve as an older peer. They are a participant in the group. They offer an example, friendship, and another more mature, Christ-like voice to the teens. They are not responsible for the group. There are a lot of demands on college students, and we want them to be free to be available to those demands without jeopardizing the CORE group's ability to function.

College Peers must contact the youth ministry staff to set up an interview before they will be allowed to serve. They must fill out the background check information and sign the accompanying sheet verifying they have read and given their compliance to this document.

" From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded. And from the one trusted with much, much more will be expected."

Luke 12:48b

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Classroom Discipline *(in addition to the shared section)*

Modeling good behavior

Please do not use phones for reasons unrelated to the present activity. Be willing to put them away when it is asked of everyone.

Please bring a physical, paper Bible to class. (Electronic and digital Bibles are great, but sometimes we ask everyone to put electronics away.)

Please follow the same rules as the teens regarding when or where to eat/drink.

Come prepared, especially if an activity is dependent on you.

Communicate potential schedule conflicts with other classroom volunteers as soon as possible if they depend on you to be there.

Non-compliance

Certain students may not respond well to correction during class time. As difficult as it may be, if it becomes obvious the student is unwilling or unable to comply we ask that all adult volunteers wait until class is dismissed and refer the situation to a ministry staff member.

Hidden Disabilities

There are students in the youth ministry who have hidden disabilities. Their specific needs may differ greatly. Volunteers will be given guidelines for how to best serve these students. We ask that volunteers pause before applying a universal approach toward a student with a hidden disability.

" My, child, do not reject the Lord's discipline, and do not get angry when He corrects you. The Lord corrects those He loves, just as parents correct the child they delight in."

Proverbs 3:11-12

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Dress Code for Youth Events

It is important for all our volunteers to understand the dress code so that:

- 1) They can follow it themselves.
- 2) They can enforce it during any youth events where these rules are important.

Please be aware of the following:

Swimming Dress Code Policy

Everyone is required to wear shorts and a dark colored t-shirt while swimming with mixed genders in a private or public place.

General Dress Code

- No article of clothing displaying offensive logos or artwork.
- No sleeveless shirts with gaping holes revealing chest and stomach.
- No halter tops or shirts revealing the midriff.
- No shirts with revealing necklines.
- No tank tops with straps narrower than two inches.
- No shorts or pants that show skin above the fingertips.
- No sagging pants that reveal underwear.
- If leggings or tights are worn as pants, a top should be worn that covers the backside when standing.

Approaching a teen when he/she violates the dress code:

- Always give them the benefit of the doubt. Whether or not it seems deliberate, you should assume this was unintentional. You will likely be more kind, and they will be less defensive.
- Please pull them aside so that they are not embarrassed among friends.
- Have a suggestion prepared before you approach them. (i.e. "I have an extra t-shirt in my room" or "There is nothing we can do about it at the moment, but please be careful if you need to bend over for something. We'll take care of it when we get back.")
- Always check with another adult volunteer before approaching a teen.

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Approaching a teen when he/she violates the dress code: (cont.)

- If at all possible, try to have an adult of the same gender approach the teen.
- If it is a commonly broken rule, an address may be best done as a group.
- If this is a newcomer or guest, he or she may not be aware of the dress code. He or she may not have a reference point for modest dress.
- Recognize this can be a sensitive issue. Do your best to affirm that modesty is important without attacking their character. If they disagree with our rules, acknowledge that it can be subjective. You might not even agree with some rules (you might think we need to be MORE strict!), but this is the standard set for everyone who wishes to participate in youth events. Encourage later conversation if they seem interested.

" Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."
I Corinthians 6:19-20

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Church-sponsored Events

We hold our volunteers in high regard, but we have the following guidelines in place to protect students from potentially vulnerable situations. They are also intended to protect adults from being vulnerable to baseless accusations or the appearance of questionable conduct.

Drivers and Travel Events

Teens are never allowed to drive a church van or bus. Any adult volunteer must scan their driver's license and proof of insurance at the church office before driving a church vehicle.

If teens are being asked to arrive at/depart from a central location, do not condone or encourage inexperienced drivers to chauffeur other teens. Anything illegal is strictly prohibited. Beyond that, rules for student drivers/passengers must derive from their parent(s). Do not assume parents have given consent for a student to drive another or ride home with another. If you have not already heard the established rules for each family involved, please call and check.

(see Electronics section for "Texting and Driving" Policy)

Overnight event chaperones

Whenever possible we strive to maintain a "Two Adult Rule." You are held liable (thus Downtown Church is held liable) for any accusations made against you by a teenager or child. Do your best to have a third person in your car, in a public restroom, on a walk, etc. **Never allow an adult to be alone with one of your teens if they are not a screened and approved volunteer.**

Chaperones in rooms

No adult is to be alone with a teen of the opposite gender unless they are related.

Any overnight trip will require an increased chaperone count. We will always strive to have one adult per sleeping unit (while obviously still avoiding a 1:1 ratio). If a special circumstance arises that needs extra attention, we might choose to have two adults in a sleeping unit.

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Chaperones in rooms (cont.)

If teens are placed in a room without a chaperone, parents must be notified prior to the event (including a list of their roommates). If parents do not give consent, other arrangements must be made. If no alternate plan can be made, the trip may not proceed.

Pick-up After Event

Communicate known pick-up times in advance. If pick-up time is unknown or is changed, please provide ample opportunity to update parents whenever pick-up time becomes apparent.

Never leave a teenager at the church building or other event place unsupervised. An adult volunteer should always be the last to leave.

Again, please ensure that you are not left alone with a teen of the opposite sex. And, if at all possible, try to avoid a situation where it is one adult with one teen. If you must be alone with a youth, we strongly suggest you get on the phone with another adult for the duration of the time you are alone together.

“ Follow my example, as I follow the
example of Christ.”

I Corinthians 11:1

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Electronic Communications Policy

When engaged in electronic communication (hereafter referring to phone calls, text messaging, multimedia messaging, email, video chat or social media) with a youth, consider whether content and/or boundaries are appropriate. If a communication is questionable for any reason including but not limited to content, volume, or timing, show it to a member of the student ministry staff. If the youth ministry staff finds out a questionable communication between a volunteer and a youth has been withheld, that volunteer may no longer be allowed to serve with the youth.

Any inter-gender communications with a youth should be reviewed by another approved adult volunteer or youth ministry staff member.

Abusive

Any communications that mock, demean, or bully will not be tolerated.

Sexually Explicit

Any sexually explicit content whether written or imaged is forbidden and criminal.

Time of day and availability

Avoid communication between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. If an extenuating circumstance arises, share the communication with a member of the youth ministry staff, another approved volunteer, and/or the parents of the youth.

Secrecy

Do not communicate anything to a youth that you would not be willing to share with his or her parents and the youth ministry staff. Do not ask youth to keep anything in confidence.

It is strongly recommended that communications with youths be shared with another adult as a personal safety measure.

Do not maintain a confidence when it could potentially harm the youth or someone else. If in doubt, contact a member of the youth ministry staff.

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“Crisis”

There may be times when a youth wants to communicate about a real or perceived crisis. This can range from relationship issues, to personal struggles, to friction with families. Be aware of the above policies. Be willing to recognize your own limitations and when you will need to seek additional help. Whenever possible, encourage the inclusion of parents.

Emergencies

If a youth indicates an intention to hurt themselves or someone else, you must report it to the youth ministry staff. If the threat is immediate (i.e. - “I am standing on a ledge” or “I have a loaded gun”), contact emergency responders. Otherwise contact a member of the youth ministry staff immediately.

Privacy

When posting pictures from an event, be sensitive to people's safety preferences. Do not assume parents/students have given consent to post pictures/videos on publicly accessible websites. Exercise increased caution regarding information that could allow for easy identification of a youth or their location.

Cell Phone Restriction for Drivers

If communication via cell phone is necessary while driving, be aware of the potential for prolonged distraction. We highly suggest making arrangements for another person to operate the phone. **Do not text while driving.**

“ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it might benefit those who listen.”

Ephesians 4:29

Child Abuse Resources

For additional information about child abuse, request information from these agencies.

- ♥ The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse offers a catalog of publications, resources, training opportunities, and assistance. To order call 800-244-5373 and leave a message.
- ♥ The Child Welfare League of America is an association of hundreds of agencies serving children, youth, and families of abuse. Write to 440 First St. NW, Ste. 310, Washington, DC 20001. Or call (202) 638-2952.
- ♥ The National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers provides training, consultation, and information services for professionals working in all areas of abuse. For contact information in your area write to 1319 F St. NW, Washington, DC 20004. Call 800-239-9950 or (202) 639-0597.
- ♥ The Child Abuse Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information is a service of the Office of Child Abuse and Neglect—a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They offer printed materials on child abuse and abuse documentation. Write to 330 C St. SW, Washington, DC 20447. Or call (703) 385-7565.
- ♥ The Bureau for At-Risk Youth distributes resources for adults to help children with issues such as child abuse, sexuality, or drug abuse. Write to 135 DuPont St., Plainview, NY 11803-0760. Call 800-99-YOUTH or (516) 349-5520.
- ♥ The Hazelden Foundation publishes many resources, including some 12-step formats. Write to 15251 Pleasant Valley Rd., Center City, MN 55012. Call 800-328-9000 or (651) 257-4010.
- ♥ The American Association of Pastoral Counselors is a membership organization that certifies pastors to do mental health. For a referral, write to 9504A Lee Hwy., Fairfax, VA 22031-2303. Or call (703) 385-6967.
- ♥ The Counselor's Bookshelf offers discounted literary resources for Church workers to give to counselees. Write to Nelson/Word Direct, 404 BNA Dr., Bldg. 200, Ste. 600, Nashville, TN 37214. Call 800-933-9673 or (615) 889-9000.
- ♥ Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc. produces several booklet series on child abuse. Write to 200 State Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373. Or call 800-628-7733.
- ♥ Samaritan Counseling Centers is a network of faith-based counseling services that can assist in developing programs, offering counseling intervention, and forming prevention strategies. For a center near you, write to The Samaritan Institute at 2696 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 380, Denver, CO 80222. Or call (303) 691-0144.

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Acknowledgment of Receipt Form

I have received a copy of Downtown Church of Christ Child & Youth Protection Policies and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the handbook. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at the Church.

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

I understand that my service as an employee or volunteer/teacher at the Downtown Church of Christ is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in these policies and procedures in no way express or imply an employment relationship between the Church and me.

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

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Child & Youth Protection Policies. I have read and will comply with the policies that pertain to the ministry area in which I will serve.

Volunteer's name (please print) _____

Volunteer's signature _____ Date _____

Please return this document to the Church office or to one of the Ministry Staff.

