

Grace Baptist Church Youth Ministries Policy Manual

Revised March, 2023

Policies and Procedures

1. Prerequisites for serving in the youth ministries¹
 - a. Attend faithfully for at least 6 months²
 - b. Complete a Youth Worker's Application
 - c. Watch the required sexual abuse awareness training videos or attend an annual training session.
 - d. Undergo and successfully pass a reference check
 - e. Those age 18 and older must additionally:
 - i. Be a member of the church
 - ii. Undergo and successfully pass a background check, which will be repeated every five years
 - f. Those who have a prior conviction of any kind of sexual misconduct or abuse – whether standing or expunged – will not be allowed to serve in any of the youth ministries at Grace Baptist Church at any time.*
2. Supervision
 - a. Only approved youth workers are allowed to help in any class or nursery. Permission must be granted by the pastoral staff before a non-approved worker may be allowed to help or visit in your classroom, unless that person is a parent of a young person in your class. Parents are never to be restricted access to their child's class or activities.
 - b. At least 2 youth workers, preferably unrelated, are to be present wherever a ministry is taking place with children or youth.³ In the event that there is only 1 adult in a classroom setting, another adult nearby should be notified and the door is to be left open for the entire class time. Youth workers are never to be alone with a child (this includes any trips to the bathroom) unless they are in plain sight of other adults.
 - c. Parental permission is to be obtained when having overnight activities and when spending one-on-one time with a young person. Except with written parental permission, no less than 2 adults of the same gender are to stay overnight in a room with a child. There are to be no mixed-gender sleeping arrangements, nor are adults or children to enter the sleeping area of the opposite sex.
 - d. Youth workers who transport children on behalf of the church are not to drive children to or from home without parental permission and must have another adult over the age of 18 present for the duration of the ride. At the end of an activity, 2 adults must wait until the last child has been picked up.
 - e. Before taking a class outside or moving locations, the pastoral staff is to be notified in advance.
 - f. It is our church's practice that only women will be allowed to serve in ministries to children under the age of 4.

¹ In this policy manual "youth ministries" refers to all ministries involving minors, from the nurseries to the youth group.

² The six-month attendance requirement may be waived in some instances at the discretion of the pastoral staff.

³ While we recognize that the best practice is that both youth workers are over the age of 18, we also recognize that it may be necessary in some instances for one of the two youth workers to be an approved minor who is older than the students being supervised.

3. Bathroom procedures

- a. No less than 2 adults of the same gender as the child are to be present any time a child is taken to the restroom. At no time are men to be allowed to assist in the ladies'/girls' restroom, nor will ladies be allowed to assist in the men's/boys' restroom, except in the case of a medical emergency.
- b. In cases where younger children require assistance with their clothing (i.e., belts, pants, zippers, pull-ups, etc.) the worker is to assist them in plain view of the assisting adult, exercising caution and discernment.
- c. If the need arises to take a single child to the bathroom during a ministry or program, the teacher's assistant should find a helper from another classroom to accompany him/her with the child. If the child is able to use the restroom without help (i.e. older elementary age children), a single approved youth worker is sufficient but must wait outside the bathroom in plain view.

4. Pick up/Drop off

- a. Only immediate family members over the age of 18 may pick up children (3rd grade and below) from the nursery or their classroom except with written permission from the child's parent or legal guardian. When granting permission to another individual, a parent must include the name of the specific individual who will be responsible for picking up their child.

5. Teacher/Student Interaction

- a. When demonstrating affection, exercise discretion. Inappropriate behavior will result in immediate dismissal.
 - i. Appropriate behavior:
 1. Giving or receiving a short hug
 2. Putting a comforting arm around the child briefly
 3. Carrying a younger child to a parent or nurse
 4. Nurturing touches to the head or shoulders
 - ii. Questionable or inappropriate behavior:
 1. Long embraces
 2. Back rubs
 3. Tickling
 4. Kisses of any kind
 5. Touching private areas
 6. Slapping on the buttocks
 7. Sitting on a child or teenager's lap
 8. Older child or teenager sitting in an adult's lap
 9. Corporal punishment or discipline that inflicts pain on the child (i.e., hitting, slapping, spanking, shaking, squeezing, biting, etc.)
- b. Physical force is not permitted in any form unless necessary to prevent a child from hurting himself or others.
- c. Photos or videos may not be taken of children without parental permission. Likewise, no photos or videos may be posted on any social media without parental permission.

6. Handling Policy Violations

- a. When an individual is observed in violation of the policies outlined in this policy manual, any witnesses are to lovingly confront the individual and remind them of the applicable policies.
- b. If they continue to violate policies, the witness should report the violation(s) to the pastoral staff.
- c. The pastoral staff is to personally confront the individual and discuss the situation with him/her.
- d. Further violations after being confronted by the pastoral staff will result in dismissal from the respective ministry.

7. Injuries and Medical Assistance

- a. Because of the risk of blood-borne pathogens and other complications, great caution must be exercised when assisting with a medical injury or illness, especially when it involves any bodily fluids. Whenever possible, seek the help of someone who has been trained in First Aid or any trained medical personnel. If the situation is truly an emergency, call 911 before sending another adult to enlist the help of a medically trained person.
- b. First Aid kits are located in the kitchen and main church office.
- c. Gloves are recommended before dealing with blood or any bodily fluid.
- d. Every effort must be made to contact a parent or legal guardian before administering medication of any kind.

8. Digital communications guidelines.

- a. Adults should never have private digital communication with a minor (i.e. text or Facebook messaging, email, etc.).
- b. Communication should be happening through the minor's parents, or other adults should be copied on the messages.

9. Identifying potential signs of abuse.

- a. Isolation, depression or loneliness
- b. Unwillingness to change clothes (for gym or other activities)
- c. Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior
- d. Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
- e. Poor peer relationships
- f. Delinquency or running away

Every effort must be made to follow these policies. If an emergency or unavoidable circumstance arises which compromises your ability to follow all of these policies, exercise wise judgment, contact the pastoral staff immediately, and stay in public view with the child/children under your care.

Sexual Abuse Reporting Procedures

1. Reporting witnessed acts of sexual abuse⁴
 - a. If possible, the witness should intervene immediately so that the action is not allowed to continue.
 - b. The witness is to report the incident immediately following steps a-h under numeral 2 below.
2. Reporting allegations of sexual abuse
 - a. Every allegation given by a child should be treated as sincere and legitimate until shown to be otherwise.
 - Whoever receives a complaint is to listen calmly and carefully, taking note of the child's behavior.
 - Do not panic or overreact to the information being disclosed.
 - Do not criticize or suggest that the child is not telling the truth.
 - Be careful not to lead the child's responses by putting words in his/her mouth.
 - Respect the child's privacy by not discussing the situation with others.
 - Do not deny or minimize the allegation or blame the child for what has happened.
 - Never promise confidentiality; always answer such requests by affirming that only those who need to be informed or involved will be notified.
 - b. The youth worker who received the allegation from a child is to contact the pastoral staff immediately.
 - c. The pastoral staff and the youth worker who received the allegation will together contact the appropriate authorities immediately. The youth worker will then fill out an Incident Report Form⁵ and turn it into the pastoral staff.
 - d. The pastoral staff will bring the situation to the attention of the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
 - e. Further action will be taken only as directed by the appropriate authorities, or by the direction of the pastoral staff.
 - f. If the accused person is a youth worker, he/she will be temporarily relieved of all youth ministry duties until the matter is resolved.
 - g. The youth worker who received the allegation is not to discuss the situation in any way with anyone else inside or outside of the church congregation. All questions about the situation are to be directed to the pastoral staff. Violation of this procedural point will result in dismissal from any and all youth ministries.
 - h. Only the church's designated spokesman (chosen by the pastoral staff) may speak on behalf of the church to the media. All requests for information by anyone in the media are to be directed to the pastoral staff. Violations of this procedural point will result in dismissal from any and all youth ministries.

⁴ "Sexual abuse" is defined in this policy as any tricked, forced, manipulated or coerced sexual activity for the pleasure of the abuser' or the victim and is not limited merely to situations that involve harm, threats, or even physical contact.

⁵ Incident report forms are located in the main church office.