

Lighthouse Youth Ministries



Preteens (5th-6th graders)

Middle School Ministry (7th-8th graders)

High School Ministry (9th-12th graders)

Policies and Procedures Manual

Updated 3/21/2019

Dear Youth Ministries Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Lighthouse Youth Ministries. At Lighthouse, we take our responsibility to care for youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for our staff members and volunteers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for youth, protecting youth, you, and the mission of Lighthouse Fellowship. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Bobby Cullen

Executive Pastor

Safety Policies & Procedures for Lighthouse Youth Ministries

Contents

- Overview of the Safety System 4
- Youth Safety Policy..... 5
- Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors 5
- Enforcement of Policies 5
- Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse 5
- Reporting Suspicions of Abuse to Law Enforcement Agencies..... 6
- Safety Committee 7
- Youth Ministry Staff/Volunteer Monitoring Plan 7
- Building Safety 7
- Staff to Youth Ratio..... 8
- Discipline Policy..... 9
- Intoxicants..... 9
- Nudity..... 9
- One-to-one Interactions with Youth 9
- Parental Contact 10
- Parental Involvement..... 10
- Physical Contact 10
- Sexually Oriented Materials..... 12
- Sleeping Arrangements..... 12
- Tobacco 13
- Verbal Interactions..... 13
- Social Media 13
- Safety Committee Members..... 14
- Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement..... 15

Overview of the Safety System

Because Lighthouse loves youth and desire to protect them, our church requires all staff members and volunteers working with youth to complete 4 SAFETY STEPS before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

Step One: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training- Our church's policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of our Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a youth for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a youth, win the youth's trust (and the trust of the youth's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the youth into sexual activity and keep the youth from disclosing the abuse.

To equip our staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, we require all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training (online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training must be renewed every two years.

Step Two: Screening Process- A volunteer must attend our church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to youth. Staff members and volunteers are required to complete our Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

1. Complete an Employment/Volunteer Application.
2. Complete the Safety Application.
3. Complete a face-to-face interview.
4. Provide references to be checked.

Step Three: Policies & Procedures- Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

Step Four: Criminal Background Check- All staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in youth activities or programming must undergo a criminal background check. Differing levels or intensity of background check may be required based on your role.

Youth Safety Policy

Our church has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at this church to act in the best interest of youth in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations to a member of the Safety Committee.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Our church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for youth and their families. To this end, 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 a Safety Committee Member and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a member of our Safety Committee. Because sexual abusers 'groom' youth for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a youth for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a member of our Safety Committee.

Enforcement of Policies

Our staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all our policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Youth Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Safety Committee.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

Staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act,

omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to a member of the Safety Committee immediately.

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

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

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, youth or vulnerable populations at our church.

Reporting Suspicions of Abuse to Law Enforcement Agencies

Staff members and volunteers are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to a member of the Safety Committee.

Texas law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency pursuant to Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code. If the staff member or volunteer prefers, the staff member or volunteer may request reporting assistance from a member of the Safety Committee; together with the safety committee member, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate authorities. If the staff member or volunteer makes a report regarding a suspicion of abuse or neglect without assistance, the staff member or volunteer will immediately notify a member of the Safety Committee. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate Texas authorities.

Our Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Safety Committee

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for youth, our church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee.

Mission Statement - The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable our Children and Youth Ministry to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members: Lead Pastor, Executive Pastor(s), Youth Director, Children's Director

Meetings - The Safety Committee will meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation. The Safety Committee will also meet yearly to review this Policy and Procedure Manual.

Responsibilities - The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing policies and procedures related to youth safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Youth Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to our Church Board of Directors regarding safety issues.

Youth Ministry Staff/Volunteer Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program by Safety Committee members to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with youth.

Building Safety

The Youth Pastor/Director will be responsible for ensuring that our Youth Ministry Building/Area is monitored during Sunday Classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers, and youth in youth classrooms.

No youth will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during youth ministry programming or meetings. Youth Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual youth in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single youth, that staff member or volunteer will take the youth to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a youth desires additional conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members are present.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Any two youth together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

Staff to Youth Ratio

Our church is committed to providing adequate staff and volunteer supervision in all Youth Ministry activities and programs. Central Texas Conference recommends that the primary youth leader be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth, and any main helpers be 1 year post high school or equivalent and 3 years age difference from oldest youth participant. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Youth Ministry activities and programs:

For groups up to and including 30 youth, there will be a minimum of 2 unrelated staff members or volunteers supervising. For groups larger than 30 youth, there will be a minimum of 3 unrelated staff members or volunteers supervising. For every additional 15 youth, 1 staff member or volunteer will be required.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the responsible Youth Ministry Pastor/Director or Youth Ministry Team Leader. This person will make diligent efforts to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to youth ratios into compliance with this policy.

**The above ratios are MinistrySafe minimum recommendations. Where supervision is concerned, more is generally better.*

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of our church that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or youth. ***No form of physical discipline is acceptable.*** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, grabbing of arms, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction of inappropriate behaviors by youth. If a youth is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that youth will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the youth's parent will be contacted to pick up the youth. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff/volunteer will verbally redirect youth involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Youth Pastor/Director.

Therefore you must have contact information for each youth at all times.

Intoxicants

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any of our church facilities, traveling with youth, or working with or supervising youth.

Nudity

Staff and volunteers in our youth ministry should never be nude in the presence of youth in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan for approval to his/her supervisor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes with adults and youth separate.

One-to-one Interactions with Youth

We recognize that meeting the emotional needs of youth may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guideline when interacting with youth.

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual youth at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed.

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for youth. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of youth:

1. Youth should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a nonpublic place should be avoided. Best practices of ministry recommend two adults in every car. Never will there be a youth alone with an adult in a vehicle.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with youth while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving church vans, or vehicles owned or rented, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive our owned or rented vehicles without prior approval from the Executive Pastor of Administration.

Parental Contact

Parents who leave a youth in the care of our staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their youth becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Youth Ministry programs. Therefore, you must have contact information for each youth at all times.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their youth is involved at our church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their youth is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Youth Ministry programs will be required to complete our volunteer application and screening process.

Physical Contact

Our church is committed to protecting youth in its care. To this end, our church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a

positive, nurturing environment for our Youth Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the youth program:

1. Side hugs, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and youth are important for youth's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Youth Pastor/Director or the Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the youth, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other youth or youth staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff or volunteers in the Youth Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant youth. A youth's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Youth staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting youth under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by staff or volunteers must be reported immediately to a member of the Safety Committee.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with youth and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any youth in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time youth ministry discussions and lessons may

address age-appropriate issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the youth the church's views on these topics. It is required that parents be notified in advance of these lessons.

Sexually Oriented Materials

Staff members and volunteers of our Youth Ministry are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented printed materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of youth. Staff members and volunteers are also prohibited from viewing or showing any videos, pictures, or other sexually related media to youth at any time.

Sleeping Arrangements

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

1. The 2-adult nonrelated rule must be followed. The 2 adult leaders present must have previously completed our church's application and screening process.
2. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Safety Committee prior to the activity and have signed approval by parents. It is recommended that this information be included in the permission slip for the event and signed by the parent.
3. As long as any youth are awake, two of the leaders must also be awake and monitoring youth to ensure safe behavior.
4. Leaders should check with parents and Youth Director regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
5. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
6. 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 youth leaders of the same gender.

7. Staff and volunteers will monitor sleeping youth by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping youth remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff and volunteers should never physically touch a youth and be in pairs.

8. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff, volunteer, and youth will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

Tobacco

Our church requires staff and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility, and while in the presence of youth or their parents. Our church is a tobacco-free facility.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and youth should be positive and uplifting. Our staff and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and be ever mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their youth.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to youth 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 and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of youth.

Social Media

All social media content should follow the guidelines as stated in this policy and procedure manual.

1. Be in line with the beliefs and practices of Lighthouse Fellowship and our Youth Ministry.
2. Should not contain any crude, violent, or sexual content.
3. No staff or volunteer should have private messages with youth, such as snap chat, facebook messenger, etc.

Safety Committee Members

Lead Pastor Frank Briggs – 817-237-2758 x206 or 817-992-5884

Executive Pastor Bobby Cullen – 817-237-2758 x203 or 682-465-7468

Executive Pastor Dan Morris – 817-237-2758 x207 or 361-688-4567

Children's Director Nanci Danielsen – 817-237-2758 x215 or 817-319-2158

Youth Director Garrett Gottlob – 817-237-2758 x210 or 951-398-9721

Safety Policies & Procedures for Lighthouse Youth Ministries Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Lighthouse Fellowship Youth Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Lighthouse Fellowship.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Lighthouse Fellowship.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Lighthouse Fellowship at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Lighthouse Fellowship. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of Lighthouse Fellowship policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

Updated 3/21/2019