

YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

Safe Church Mid Year Mini-Training for New Volunteers

Volunteer Name: _____

Ministry Coordinator leading the mini-training: _____

Date of Training: _____

Please initial next to each section, indicating that you have read through each of the 4 sections at home.
Bring any questions to your Ministry Coordinator

_____ Supervision: Youth Ministry
My Questions:

_____ Discipline Policy: Youth Ministry Discipline & Serious Offenses
My Questions:

_____ Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse
My Questions:

_____ Emergencies
My Questions:

To do WITH your Ministry Coordinator

1. View 2 emergency exits from your classroom(s)
2. Safe Gathering/Meeting Space in an emergency:
3. Learn how to lock the door
4. Learn how to use the walkie talkie
5. Tour the church building - all emergency exits, all levels of the church.

IV. SUPERVISION

D. Youth Ministry Guidelines

The Youth Ministry guidelines are designed to protect the children and youth in our congregation from harm and to protect teachers and youth ministers from false or mistaken accusations.

1. Scheduled Events:

- a. Parents/guardians are to be notified of all events that are held in places other than the normal meeting area of that program. The notification will include date, times, transportation arrangements including pick up, the location(s) of the event, and cell phone of the event leader.
- b. Ordinarily, at least two adults will be present at group activities. When this is not possible, parents/guardians will be notified.
- c. During scheduled events, group leaders must know where their youth are at all times. If a young person leaves an event without permission, parents/guardians will be called immediately.
- d. Displays of affection between a youth leader and a youth group member should be appropriate to the nature of the relationship, limited to a brief hug, an arm around the shoulders, an open-hand pat on the back, or a handclasp/handshake.
- e. For any off-campus event, a permission slip specific to that event must be signed by a parent or guardian before that youth is allowed to participate. If the event is an overnight event, an emergency contact information form must also be completed.
- f. Separate sleeping areas for males and females will be designated for overnight events, with at least one leader of respective gender present to supervise for the entire time of the event. At least two leaders will be present for overnight events.

2. Meetings between Youth Leaders and Young People

- a. One-on-one meetings should be held in public spaces.
- b. The Associate Pastor of Youth will be informed of scheduled meetings in advance.
- c. Parents/guardians must be notified of one-on-one and small group meetings that are not scheduled on the church calendar (a text message, voice mail, or an answering machine is adequate). When this is not possible, the leaders should then notify a pastoral staff member of the meeting, the name of youth, and the time and place of the event.
- d. When meeting in a youth's residence, youth leaders must be sure to meet in common or public spaces of the house with parent permission.
- e. Displays of affection between a youth leader and a youth group member should be appropriate to the nature of the relationship, limited to a brief hug, an arm around the shoulders, an open-hand pat on the back, or a handclasp/handshake.

3. A STF Incident Report must be filled out in the case of an accident or injury. A copy should be given to the child's parents/guardians and the Youth Group Leader. See Incident Report Form in the Appendix for further guidance.

4. All adult volunteers are mandated reporters and are legally required to report any type of suspected Child Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse) to Childline immediately. The volunteer should fill out an STF Incident Form and notify both the Youth Group Leader and Lead Pastor of any suspected abuse.

V. DISCIPLINE

B. Youth Discipline Policy

In this environment, discipline is defined as training provided to develop or improve a skill or behavior. The focus of discipline is on the future and on growth. It is done in love and concern and is not designed to create fear or guilt. The number one rule in ministry with students is that everyone should be treated with the kind of respect, love, and support to which scripture calls us.

Clear rules, expectations and consistent messages about behavior are the key to effective discipline procedures. Occasionally students have trouble following the rules or display disruptive behavior. In these cases, the following steps should be taken.

Discipline for minor offenses:

1. The leader should talk with the student and state clearly what the problem behavior is and what the student should do instead.
2. If the student continues to exhibit problem behavior, the leader should give a warning to the student.
3. If the problem behavior continues, the student should be removed from the activity (but remain visible to the leaders). Sometimes a short “time out” is all that is needed. The student should be warned at this point that further disruptive or inappropriate behavior will result in contact with the student’s parent(s).
4. The final step with problem behavior is contacting parents to inform them that the student may not continue participation in the event and to determine how supervision will be transferred back to the parent. In most cases, the student will be welcomed back at the next ministry activity.

C. Serious Offenses

Severe or illegal behavior such as assault, drug possession, weapons in possession, theft, destruction of property, sexual activity, or any other behavior that could put students or others in danger will not be tolerated. For these types of offenses, the procedures will be:

1. Immediate removal of the student from the ministry activity and immediate notification will be made to parent or guardian.
2. The police will be contacted as appropriate.
3. An Incident Report will be completed immediately following the offense, which is to be brought before the pastor and elder with oversight for the Safe Church Committee for further discussion of appropriate measures. Follow-up actions must also be documented and kept on file.
4. The student may be suspended from ministry activities for an amount of time determined by church leadership.
5. The student and family will be treated with respect and love, and the student will be welcomed back to ministry activities at the church’s discretion, after the suspension period or when it is determined that he/she is ready to respect the rules of the ministry.

VII. RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

A. General Response and Reporting Procedures

Our first priority must be to prevent future harm. Reporting may be the best way to prevent harm and to begin helpful intervention.

1. It is essential to take allegations of child abuse seriously:

- a. Stay calm and do not overreact.
- b. Presume the child is telling the truth. Take the child seriously when he/she tells the story. Avoid judgmental statements such as, "I think you just had a bad dream." Do not try to convince the child that the story is untrue or that it did not happen the way the child reports it did.
- c. Listen to and reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone. Offer to support the child, and remind the child that you care about him/her.
- d. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child's story, since this may cause the child to stop talking or believe you are upset with the child.
- e. Tell the child you are glad s/he told you.
- f. Remind the child that whatever happened was not his/her fault. Remind the child that it was a good decision to tell someone what happened to him/her. Tell the child that you want to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
- g. Do not make promises to the child that you will not tell anyone what has been shared with you. Do not offer a child a reward for telling the story or repeating it to another adult. Do not tell the child he/she has been abused. Do not make judgements about the alleged abuser.
- h. Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint. Share with the child that other people need to know about what happened.
 - a. In the case of physical abuse, observe only bruises that are accessible without removing clothing. Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing. Never ask a child to remove clothing.
 - b. Take notes immediately afterwards while it is still fresh in your memory. Keep a written record documenting any unexplained injuries, bruises, burns, or scratches. Keep the information confidential.
 - c. Do not investigate the child's story.

2. If you are uncertain about whether allegations are sufficient to make a report, be sure to engage the Lead Pastor and Children's Ministry Coordinator.

3. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been abused or neglected is required by law to report the suspicion to either the Childline state hotline or the Department of Human Services (DHS). It is helpful to have contact information for the child's guardian when reporting (address, phone number, etc). The Children's Ministries Supervisor has these on file.

Phone Numbers: **Childline: 1-800-932-0313**
 DHS (Philadelphia): 215-683-6100

Website: **Child Welfare Portal (www.compass.state.pa.us)**

4. The person who made the report must also immediately inform the appropriate Ministry Coordinator and the Lead Pastor. The reporter must keep the information confidential. An STF Incident Report form (see Appendix) must be completed.

5. Failure to report can lead to criminal liability, so, when in doubt, report. You may also make a report anonymously. Do not investigate. Leave any investigation to specially trained experts.

IX. EMERGENCIES

A. Communication

A walkie-talkie will be used during Sunday service in both Nursery rooms, Children's Church, and one will be provided to a deacon at the main entrance of the church. Charging these will be the responsibility of the deacons. Obtaining them before teaching will be the responsibility of the respective volunteers. Volunteers will keep them on with the volume turned all the way up. Deacons will keep them on during the service. They will be stored in the overflow room and charged in the overflow room.

B. Emergency Exit Policy

1. All classrooms and gathering spaces will have posted Emergency Exit Instructions for one main exit route and one alternate route.
2. All volunteers will be notified of the emergency exit routes and policies prior to service.
3. During a fire emergency, or other emergency requiring a swift exit, volunteers will bring the attendance sheet with them as they escort children out of the building to designated safe location.
4. Volunteers will take attendance once in the safe location outside the building to ensure all children are accounted for. If a child is missing, volunteer will use the walkie-talkie to communicate with other teachers and the deacon to try to locate the missing child.
5. Parents/guardians will reunite with their children at the designated safe location.

C. Lock Down Policy

1. In the event of a lock down during Sunday service, teachers will be informed by the deacon with the walkie-talkie.
2. All volunteers will receive instructions on how to lock their door, in the event of an emergency.
3. Volunteers will gather children in a location in the classroom that is not visible from the classroom door windows and sit as quietly as possible.
4. No one may enter the classroom during the emergency, until the lock down has been lifted.
5. Deacon with walkie-talkie will inform teachers when the lock down has ended.

D. Active Shooter Policy

1. Run, Hide, Fight
2. Teachers will remove children from the building immediately in case of active shooter (RUN), if believed safe to do so.
3. If not safe to leave, teachers will quietly gather children in location not visible from windows, lock the doors, and shelter in place (HIDE)
4. Teachers will trust their instincts and do what they believe is best.