

GRACE

BAPTIST CHURCH

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Adopted by the Elders of Grace Baptist Church

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OUR MISSION

At Grace Baptist Church (hereafter referred to as GBC), the mission of our youth ministry is to create an environment where youth:

- Will be exposed to the gospel of God.
- Will be encouraged to surrender their lives to Jesus.
- Will be challenged to grow deeper in their understanding of Jesus/God through His word.
- Will be equipped to serve Him for the rest of their lives.

OUR GOALS

The youth ministry of Grace Baptist Church exists to glorify God by:

- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to students with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17).
- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4).
- Maintaining a safe and secure environment for our students.
- Praying for the students and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10).
- Living faithfully before the students and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1).
- Encouraging students to learn to serve and to not just be served (Mark 10:43-45).
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards such that servants and teachers always live and serve above reproach, protecting the reputation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Preparing students to one day walk with God as adults, which means encouraging them to be a part of the public services and Lord willing, one day, a fully participating adult member.

STAFF AND SERVANT LEADER EXPECTATIONS

For purposes of this policy the following definitions apply:

- Youth Pastor or Youth Director (hereafter referred to as Youth Director) is the individual authorized by the Elder Board to oversee the GBC Youth Ministry. The Youth Director is responsible to the Elder Board for adherence to and enforcement of all policies outlined in this document.

- Staff refers to any full or part time paid employee of GBC.
- Servant leader refers to an individual over the age of 18 who is actively involved in GBC Youth Ministry and will have consistent contact with students at Youth Group meetings, outings, etc. Servant leaders under the age of 21 will only be permitted to work in the Middle School area.
- Chaperones or helpers are individuals over the age of 18 who assist with Youth Ministry events on a case-by-case or one-time basis. Chaperones and helpers assist Youth Ministry at the discretion of the Youth Director.
- Servant leaders, chaperones, or helpers who work consistently with youth (hereafter referred to as students) in any setting must be a church member or actively involved in the life and ministry of GBC for at least six months.

All youth ministry staff and servant leaders share Biblical responsibilities for:

- Loving the students as Christ loves them.
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives.
- Ministering to the students while maintaining a self-motivated approach to growth in their own understanding of the Scriptures and their ability to teach them to others.
- Understanding that the shepherding of students is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for discipling them.
- Providing GBC youth ministry students with the safest environment possible while they are in our care.

To this end we:

- Conduct personal interviews with all youth ministry servants prior to their working with our youth.
- Perform background checks on all full-time church staff, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with students.
- Require training for all youth ministry staff and servant leaders.
- Employ scheduling procedures and servant/student ratios that optimize safety.
- Equip each area with a first aid kit.
- Educate our staff and servants to recognize suspected child abuse and to require them to understand and follow any applicable reporting laws and to encourage them to report suspected abuse to church officials.
- Adhere to a two-servant room policy whenever possible.
- Equip our servants to know how to evacuate students safely in case of an emergency.

PARAMETERS FOR THE STUDENT PROTECTION POLICY

This student protection policy applies to students from 6th grade through 12th grade who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of Grace Baptist Church for the church's youth ministry-related, church-sponsored programs and activities (Bible studies held at the church, youth group weekly meetings, planned outings, etc.)

PROTECTING THE STUDENTS BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Youth Group meetings. Every applicant who wishes to serve in youth ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend youth ministry training conducted by the Youth Ministry Director.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, GBC has established a screening procedure to approve all servant leaders to work with our youth:

- Servant leaders must be members or regular attenders of GBC in good standing for at least six months and in agreement with the GBC Statement of Beliefs.
- Servant leaders must be eighteen years of age or older.
- Servant leaders must have completed the servant application and been recommended by or in consultation with the Youth Ministry Director.
- At least one reference check must be satisfactorily completed prior to beginning of service. Criminal record checks and other appropriate screening checks will be completed.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- Servant leaders are to be approved by the Youth Ministry Director in consultation with one of the pastors or with the elder overseeing the ministry.
- Servant leaders must repeat the screening procedures and criminal background checks every two years.

Training

All youth ministry servant leaders must attend GBC's youth training conducted by the Youth Director before they begin to work with the youth without supervision. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing servants to update them on policies and procedures should they change. Parents with questions about youth training are welcome to view the training material.

Removal

GBC leadership reserves the authority to reject any applicant for servant service or dismiss an existing servant leader for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or servant's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with youth.

Any servant, helper, deacon, staff or elder (or any GBC member) who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by a servant leader must report that knowledge to the Youth Ministry Director and/or the pastor or elder who oversees youth ministry for appropriate review and action.

Parental Consent

GBC Youth Ministry Director or servant leaders will seek verbal or signed parental consent for all the following situations:

- Transporting students to any off-church activity.
- Holding any off-church one-on-one meeting with a student. For Middle School students, consent will be sought for each instance. For High School students, one-time permission from parents can be given at the beginning of the school year. At any time, a parent can direct that no one from the Youth Ministry meet one-on-one with their child.

PROTECTING THE STUDENTS AS THEY ARRIVE AND DEPART

Arrival and Departure Times

Servants should be ready for youth to arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents can know they are under the church's care when they enter the building.

Two adult leaders will remain with students until they are all either picked up by parents or depart the parking lot if they are driving. If students are not picked up after a reasonable amount of time after the session ends, leaders will attempt to locate the parents, but will remain with the student until they are picked up.

Divorce, Separation, Foster Care, or Custody Visitation

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, it is the parent's responsibility to notify the Youth Director if the other parent is not authorized to pick up their child. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to pick up the student, the servant leader should immediately contact the Youth Ministry Director for guidance or assistance.

If a parent presents a court order for a student, contrary to the instructions of the parent that enrolled them in the youth activity, law enforcement is to be contacted to handle the situation. In

any of these circumstances, the servant should immediately contact the Youth Ministry Director and an elder.

PROTECTING THE STUDENTS WHILE THEY ARE IN OUR CARE

Supervision of Students

For youth ministry meetings and programs, two qualified adult servants will be present in each classroom whenever possible.

Ministry servant leaders are never to be in a room alone with one student with the door shut. If a situation arises when the leader will have a single student – even for a short period of time – they will ensure that the classroom door is open or move to an area within visible range of another group of students with leaders.

Ministry servant leaders will not have private one-on-one meetings with students on church property.

The suggested supervision ratios for low risk, onsite events with youth is 1:10 (one leader for every 10 youth) after the minimum requirement of 2 adult leaders is met. Where the risk in the activity increases, the supervision should also increase. The Youth Director, in coordination and consultation with ministry servant leaders and GBC pastoral staff will determine this level on a case by case basis. We understand these ratios can only be met with enough servants and they are the ministry's goals. If the ratio is exceeded, the Youth Ministry Director should be notified and asked for more servants to maintain these ratios.

For youth ministry outings it is preferable that one or more of the accompanying adult chaperones or helpers be a parent or guardian of one of the participants.

We understand youth servant leaders very well may develop personal relationships with their students if the students are willing. Utmost propriety must be observed whenever a servant leader is meeting with a student. Meetings held with students off church property should typically be held with parent knowledge and in a public space.

Visibility

All sessions and programs involving youth at GBC are open door. When youth classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room. Pastors and parents have the right to observe any activity that involves Youth Ministry students.

Counseling

GBC understands the need to maintain appropriate boundaries to protect students, ministry staff, and the church from misconduct or allegations of misconduct. At the same time, we also

recognize that meeting the spiritual needs of individuals may occasionally require ministry staff to speak with them outside of a group setting.

Therefore, 1-on-1 meetings with students in 6th – 12th grade will adhere to the following guidelines:

Open Door Policy

Any counseling session or other meeting where the ministry staff is meeting with a student 1-on-1 should be done in a highly visible and public setting, such as a coffee shop, restaurant, open area of the church, etc.

If the meeting is to take place in an office or other room of the church, the door must remain open for the duration of the meeting.

Under no circumstances should a 1-on-1 meeting take place in the church when the building is empty or on non-church property if there are no other people in the immediate area.

It is recommended that the pastoral staff member make another staff member, pastor, or elder aware of the time and location of their meeting, as well as who they will be meeting with. This notification is to be made in advance. In the event of an unplanned meeting, the staff member should inform another staff member, pastor, or elder immediately and observe all other guidelines.

Private Meetings

In the event that a more private setting is necessary due to the nature of the conversation and the privacy of the information being discussed, staff meeting with students in 6th – 12th grade will arrange for a spouse, another staff member, an elder, or a servant leader of the same gender as the student to join them.

GBC Youth Ministry servant leaders are not professional counselors. Consequently, this occasionally poses a significant boundary issue when working with young students. As they begin to trust the Youth Ministry leaders, they will begin to confide in them. Any servant leader counseling a student will do so in a public area in view of others. Females should counsel females and males should counsel males.

Confidentiality

Problems also may arise when a young person confides in a servant leader, expecting them to maintain confidentiality. Unfortunately, not all counseling issues can remain confidential.

Any staff members or Youth Ministry servant leader is required to report immediately to the Youth Director if:

- A young person is being abused sexually
- A young person is threatening to hurt him/herself (suicide, cutting, etc.)

- A young person is threatening to hurt someone else (homicide, revenge, etc.)
- A young person reveals a personal crisis/endangerment (pregnancy, drug abuse addictions, criminal activity, etc.).

If any of these situations arise, the Youth Director will take the appropriate course of action, including notifying the Senior Pastor, consulting authorities and/or parents or pursuing professional counseling options. The Youth Director is available to give counsel and guidance on any issues or concerns that arise.

Because we are dealing with minors, we will use the utmost discretion as to who to involve in various issues. We desire to build trust with our young people, but not to the extent of keeping parents excluded from their child's life.

Transportation

When it is necessary to provide transportation for students to off church property activities the following guidelines apply:

- Transporting in the church van is the primary means of off-church transportation and is subject to church policies and procedures for drivers and passengers.
- When personal vehicles are used, the driver must be above the age of 21, have a valid driver's license, and provide proof of insurance.
- No student will travel alone to a youth ministry event with an adult other than their parent, without parental approval and notification to the Youth Director
- The Youth Director must be notified if chaperones or helpers are to transport students to an activity.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS WITH STUDENTS

For most children and young people in our society today, electronic communications are a part of daily life and a key way of engaging socially. New social media platforms and apps are being developed every day, and no one policy can hope to keep up with the ever-changing landscape. Rather than attempting to create a comprehensive policy for use in GBC Youth Ministry, here are some key principles to guide you as you communicate with our young people:

- Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of content and method.
- Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationship. Don't use electronic communications for sensitive subjects, emotionally charged issues, or when back and forth conversation is better.
- Be transparent. Keep communications public, brief and avoid secrecy.
- Do not initiate social media friendships. You may choose to accept if they initiate.
- Whenever possible, communicate electronically with groups rather than individuals.

- When posting on social media, think carefully about the impact of what you communicate has on the entire church community. People may well see you as representing GBC. Avoid the impression of favoritism in only communicating with select individuals.
- Respect others. Avoid publishing names, contact details, or other personal information of people online.
- Be truthful. Do not ever hide your identity or pretend to be someone you are not.
- Know the digital terrain. Be aware of and comply with terms of use and privacy options and control for each site or media you use.
- Report online abuse. Laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth apply equally to the digital world.
- Finally, use your common sense. If in doubt seek advice from another before you begin.

HANDLING STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Youth ministry servants are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which students can learn, have fun, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing students towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or rebuking inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of addressing inappropriate behavior may include

- Reminding the student of behavior expectations by using clear, positive statements.
- Withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time.
- Separating a student (with appropriate adult supervision) from the situation or problem, particularly if his or her behavior is endangering or upsetting other students.

Correction and rebuke should be discrete, calm, and never outside of the sight of others. If a rebuke becomes necessary, it should be done in a biblical manner with the goal of returning the student to acceptable behavior. Servant leaders should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to students.

Youth ministry servants and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of physical restraint unless another student is in imminent danger. Please report any of these problems (as well as the appropriate response taken to deal with the behavior) to the Youth Ministry Director and complete an Incident Report (see Appendix).

If a student's behavior is uncontrollable or the student does not respond to the acceptable means of correction or rebuke indicated above, servant leaders or the Director will immediately contact the parents. If the student assaults, harasses or bullies other students physically or emotionally, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be immediately called so the student can be removed.

PHYSICAL TOUCH POLICY

Two types of relationships are important to consider: servant-to-student and student-to-student.

Servant-to-Student

Appropriate physical contact can be an effective means of showing support, encouragement and healthy affection toward students who are receptive to this form of physical expression.

However, it can also be misinterpreted, especially in students of youth ministry age. Ministry servant leaders must exercise good judgment and never force any physical contact on any student. In our interaction with students, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults when interacting with students.
- There is no universally accepted “safe” areas to touch a student, however, a brief touch on the hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head are generally considered acceptable. It is the responsibility of the servant leader to ensure any touch remains welcomed and appropriate.
- Other appropriate physical displays of affection and support include hand-shakes, high-fives, hand slaps, and fist bumps. Verbal praise will always be the primary way to communicate our care and concern for our students.
- Inappropriate touch involves but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the student’s lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the student, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify a student’s behavior with physical force.
- Servants should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a student feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- A servant leader must never touch a student out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else’s child.

Student-to-Student

- No male and female students under eighteen should ever be alone together while in youth ministry inside the church.
- Male and female students will respect each other’s personal space and personal being. Keeping your hands to yourself is always a good guideline.
- Public displays of affection between students are not allowed during youth sessions.
- Fighting will not be tolerated and any student participating in violent action will be dismissed from a class/program and placed into his or her parent’s care.

FOOD AND DRINK POLICY

It is the parent’s responsibility to notify the Youth Director if their child has any allergies or

other medical concerns. It is the responsibility of the Youth Director to inform the student's leaders of any such issues, and for the leaders to ensure the student is kept safe.

SECURITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, staff members, Pastors, elders, and/or Gatekeepers will be called to assist with the emergency and, if appropriate, call 911.

In the case of a suspected kidnapping, immediately call 911 to secure help from the police and the exit doors should be secured until police arrive.

Accidents, First Aid, and Medical Emergencies

See each room's Emergency Plan (located on or near the door) for information on the nearest first aid kit. In the event of serious injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called, and parents should be located and informed immediately.

Servants should complete an Incident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor, prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident.

Please report any of these incidents (as well as the response taken) to the Youth Ministry Director and complete an Incident Report (see Appendix).

Evacuation Procedures

Please see the Emergency Plan posted on or near the classroom door for evacuation procedures. If an evacuation is necessary, leaders should inform their class of the evacuation plan, count the number of students in their room, and proceed in a calm and orderly fashion to the gathering point.

In good weather, proceed to Cox Park, located across Oak Street immediately adjacent to the church parking lot. In poor or winter weather, proceed to St. Mark's Lutheran Church across 24th Ave.

Please do not allow students to depart either on their own or with parents until after you have arrived at the gathering point and have counted your students to ensure everyone is safe.

HEALTHY STUDENT POLICY

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure their students are healthy enough to participate in youth meetings and activities. Should a student appear so ill during a class that their leader feels they are unable to continue, they will notify the Youth Director who will contact the parents.

Neither servants nor church staff may give any medication to any student. Parents of students with special needs are to contact the Youth Ministry Director before allowing them to attend

youth ministry activities. This allows the staff to assess the needs of the student and assist parents in transitioning their child into these activities.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are very effective for protecting both students and servants from illness. These methods are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in any setting and should always be used.

Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.

NEGLECT & ABUSE PREVENTION, REPORTING & RESPONSE

Definitions

What is child neglect and abuse? It is important to define our terms.

Child neglect is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

Child abuse is any act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.

Child sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.

Sexual exploitation includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution; and using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.

Prevention

GBC takes protection against and reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. In an effort to prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip staff, and servants about neglect and abuse.
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines as set out in this policy manual. Many of the policies are written to protect students, including the two-adult rule, visibility guidelines, and touch policies.
- Train and screen servants prior to contact with any students. Screening includes filling out an application, getting feedback from references and requiring a criminal background check.
- Require all full-time staff to submit to a criminal background check within a month of joining staff.
- Repeat screening procedures and criminal background checks for full-time staff and servants every five years.
- Require servants and staff to be members or regular attenders for at least six months prior to serving in student ministry.

Any instance of suspected or observed abuse or neglect should immediately be reported to the Youth Ministry Director, a Pastor, and/or an elder of GBC.

Anyone hearing about, witnessing, or suspected the abuse of a child should note what happened (or what the child said happened), who the child was with, where it happened, and when it happened. All of this should be documented.

If any servant or staff member witnesses an incident that may be abusive they should immediately intervene to protect the child, follow up with the Youth Ministry Director, complete an Incident Report, and act in accordance with applicable laws.

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the Youth Ministry Director, a Pastor, or any elder at GBC. This reporting includes questionable behavior and/or possible offenses (servants observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, like abrasions, lacerations, etc.). Any person who serves as the initial point of contact is required to report all allegations and/ or eye-witness accounts to the Youth Ministry Director.

RESPONSE TO NEGLECT & ABUSE

GBC will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of

neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

The safety and well-being of the student will be the chief concern for any response to suspected/observed abuse or neglect, and we will not hesitate to contact civil authorities when necessary.

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO BREECHEES OF CONDUCT

As a church, we desire to respond to any breach in conduct biblically. God's Word gives us implicit instructions on how we should confront sin (Matt. 18:15-20; Lk. 17:1-4; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).

The first step is to confront the individual yourself and have a personal conversation.

Second, if that does not bring about a satisfactory conclusion (which would include a recognition of the error and desire to make changes) then it should be reported to one or two others who then together have a conversation with the offending person.

Thirdly, if the breach of conduct is still not resolved it should be raised to the church through the Board of Elders for final resolution.

If you have any questions about this Youth Protection Policy, please contact the Youth Ministry Director

APPENDIX 1

Example Incident Report Form (Available in each room or from Youth Ministry Director)

Name of Student: _____ Date: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Name of Leader: _____

Time of Incident: _____ Incident Location: _____

If injury, location of injury on student: _____

NOTE: If head injury, contact parents immediately.

Explanation of Incident (Please be thorough):

Describe care administered to student following the incident:

Check all Appropriate Action Items:

___ Ministry Director Notified Time: _____

___ Parent/Guardian Notified Time: _____

Please obtain all signatures below:

Leader: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Ministry Director: _____ Date: _____