



MINISTRYSAFE

**Grace Church
Student Safety Policies**

Dear Student Ministries Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Grace Church!

At Grace Church, we take our responsibility to care for students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

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

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

Sincerely,

Grace Church Leadership

Grace Church Safety Policies & Procedures for Student Ministries

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Overview of the Grace Church Safety System

Because we love students and desire to protect them, Grace Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Grace Church 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 Grace Church Leadership. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a student for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Grace Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Grace Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training (live or online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Grace Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only);
- complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers);
- complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers);
- provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers).

*Completing the screening process requires a volunteer to be a member at Grace Church plus demonstrable involvement for at least 6 months (Or can be eligible with at least 6 months of membership without demonstration of involvement)

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

Grace Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Student Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Grace Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Grace Church to act in the best interest of students in every program.

In the event that any staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behavior (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 these observations to his or her immediate supervisor and a pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Grace Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for students 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 Grace Church Pastoral Team 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 supervisor or Grace Church Leadership. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a student for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or Grace Church Leadership.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

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

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for students, Grace Church 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 an immediate supervisor in the ministry area and a pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended 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 may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Grace Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Grace 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 or students at Grace Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members and volunteers at Grace Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the immediate supervisor of the area and a pastor.

Texas state law requires that any person having cause to believe that 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.

In 2013, the state of Texas modified Chapter 261.101(b) of the Texas Family Code (reporting statute) such that 'professionals' (teachers, nurses, doctors, day care employees and others) must personally make a report to the appropriate authorities.

A staff member or volunteer *may* report to an immediate supervisor, Youth Pastor or Executive Pastor, and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. 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 criminal authorities.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Youth Ministries, the informed pastor will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the student spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation.

If appropriate, the informed pastor will inform the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-5400) or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680).

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

Grace Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Grace Church Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children and students, Grace Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Grace Church Student Ministry to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. the pastor responsible for youth/children.
2. the head of church security.
3. the church administrator.

MEETINGS

The pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

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

Student Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with students.

1. **A supervisor** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly.
2. **The Youth Pastor** conducts written performance evaluations annually for individuals in paid staff positions.
3. **The Youth Pastor** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
4. **Another pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Student Ministry program at least once each quarter.
5. **The Lead Pastor** meets with Youth Pastor once monthly to discuss Student Ministry.
6. **The Pastoral Team** meets with Youth Pastor once each year to discuss Student Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
7. **The Youth Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs that occur weekly.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Youth Pastor will be responsible for ensuring that the Youth Ministry area is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and students in student classrooms or meetings.

No student 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 student in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single student, that staff member or volunteer will take the student to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a student 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 or volunteers are present, or into a public space.)

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

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

STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO

Grace Church is committed to providing adequate staff and volunteer supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Student Ministry activities and programs:

For groups up to and including 10 students, there will be at least 1 staff member or volunteer supervising. For groups ranging 11 to 29 students, there will be at least 2 staff members or volunteers supervising. For groups larger than 30 students, there will be at least 3 staff members or volunteers supervising.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify supervisory staff responsible for the program or event. The responsible supervisory staff member will make diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

DISCIPLINE

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

INTOXICANTS

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Grace Church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising students.

NUDITY

Staff and volunteers in Grace Church's student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students 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 to the Youth Pastor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Grace Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from the Youth Pastor.

In the event a closed-door meeting must occur, the student staff member must inform another staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked.

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

TRANSPORTATION

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

1. Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Grace Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented Grace Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Grace Church owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a student in the care of Grace Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Youth Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Grace Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, Grace Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Youth Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the student program:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and students are important for student'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 and a pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the student, 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 students or student 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 Student 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 student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Student staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor and a pastor.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time youth ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will convey the church's views on these topics.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers of Grace Church's Student Ministry are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of students, including those in electronic form.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members/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. One adult is not allowed to be alone with one youth unsupervised. All adult leaders must have previously completed Grace Church's screening process and MinistrySafe training.
2. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be approved by the Youth Pastor prior to the activity.
3. As long as any students are awake, one of the leaders must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
4. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment 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 student leaders or parents of the same gender.
7. At least one staff member or volunteer will sleep in the same room as students or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open and unlocked and ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places.
8. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

TOBACCO

Grace Church requires staff members, volunteers, and students to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility, and while in the presence of students or their parents, or during Grace Church activities or programs. Grace Church is a tobacco-free facility including eCigs.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. Grace Church staff members 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 children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to students 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 students.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Grace Church's Student Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Grace Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Grace Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my ministry position description. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the full term specified in the position description, I understand that my service is volunteer and that I can choose to end this relationship at any time (if possible, by providing two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

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

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

I hereby acknowledge receipt of Grace Church policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page to remain attached to the Grace Church Safety Policies]

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

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[This page to be signed, detached and delivered to the Ministry Safe Admin at Grace Church.]