



**BEFREE
CHURCH**

Safety Policy

Youth and Friendship Ministries



Dear Ministries Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to BE Free Church Youth Ministry!

At BE Free Church, we take our responsibility to care for youth 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 volunteers and staff members at BE Free Church providing services to children and teens from birth through 12th grade and adults with special needs. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment protecting them, you, and the mission of BE Free Church.

After you have carefully read these policies, please sign and return the BE Free Safety Policy agreement form located on the last page. If you have questions, please contact your ministry leader.

Sincerely,

BE Free Church Leadership

BE Free Church Policies & Procedures for Youth Ministry

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Overview of BE Free Church Safety System

BE Free Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or youth (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

SCREENING PROCESS

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

- complete an Employee Application (employees only)
- complete the Volunteer Application (employees and volunteers)
- complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)

*A volunteer must regularly attend BE Free Church for one year before being considered to serve in volunteer positions providing access to children, teens or vulnerable populations. Exceptions of the one-year attendance requirement may be made with approval of ministry staff and church leadership. All volunteers must be minimum of age 13 or entering 7th grade to volunteer to serve in Children's ministry, and must be at least 18 years old or graduated high school to serve in the Youth Ministry.

SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING

BE Free Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Ministry staff and volunteers are required to report any policy violations. Timely documentation of incidents will be submitted to the BE Free Church Safety Committee for monitoring and oversight. Staff and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a person for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a young person, win their trust (and the trust of the parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the young person into sexual activity and keep them from disclosing the abuse.

To equip BE Free Church staff and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, BE Free Church requires completion of MinistrySafe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Youth ministries staff 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. The last page indicated will be returned for record to the appropriate Ministry Leader.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

BE Free Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering with youth undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. Any reports on the Criminal Background check will warrant further investigation. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors. Criminal Background Checks will be routinely updated for all children and youth volunteers and workers. Any future incidents with law enforcement or other pertinent

services (driving or medical) should be brought to the Ministry Leader for communication as long as involved in active volunteering.

Safety Policy

ABUSE - ZERO TOLERANCE

BE Free Church has a **zero tolerance for any form of abuse** in ministry programs and activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at BE Free Church to act in the best interest of all participants 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 responsibility to immediately report their observations to their Ministry Area Leader and member of the pastoral staff.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

BE Free Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of BE Free Church safety policies. Failure to enforce and violations of these BE Free Church safety policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, corrective and retraining action, or reassignment from any position directly or indirectly within Youth Ministries – for both volunteers and staff members. All incidents will be documented, archived, and signed by all appropriate parties regardless of perceived intensity within a timely manner to be reviewed.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicion of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATIONS OF POLICIES

In order to maintain a safe environment for our youth, BE Free 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 their ministry area leader, or a member of the pastoral staff.

SUSPENSION: CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child or youth will be immediately suspended from participation in BE Free Church Children and 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 youth or vulnerable populations at BE Free Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from BE Free Church.

Knowingly failing to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination (employee) or removal (volunteer). Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act

may be restricted from participation in any activities involving youth or vulnerable populations at BE Free Church

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICION OF ABUSE

BE Free Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for youth of all ages 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 the Pastoral Staff and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' youth for abuse, it is possible that a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child or teen for sexual abuse. Please report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, such that the church may take appropriate action to safeguard participants in the program.

We report suspected or alleged abuse or neglect to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Abuse Hotline: 1-800-842-2288

Because many adults are unfamiliar with Connecticut reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, BE Free Church utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when a BE Free Church supervisor reports the suspicion or allegation together with the individual who saw, heard or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

This practice is not required, or intended to inhibit any staff member or volunteer from reporting to law enforcement, DCF, or the abuse hotline directly. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone.

No permission is needed from BE Free Church before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline.

All reports made to law enforcement or DCF are to be reported to church pastoral staff or ministry leaders within 24 hours.

When in doubt, report.

Mental Health - Suicide, Suicidal thoughts, Self harm

Many leaders are unsure about how to address sensitive mental health areas. The following information is provided to help leaders recognize and respond effectively. A leader is not expected to assess 'risk' or plan intervention but rather recognize signs of suicidal thoughts and self-harm, and to encourage help.

Suicide is a death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

A **suicide attempt** is a non-fatal, self-directed, and potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. Previous suicide attempts significantly increase a youth's risk of death by suicide and often lead to subsequent and more lethal suicide attempts.

Suicidal ideation refers to thinking about or planning suicide. The thoughts lie on a continuum of severity from a wish to die with no method, plan, intent, or behavior, to active suicidal ideation with a specific plan and intent. Although suicidal ideation does not include physically harmful behaviors, over one third of young people who experience suicidal ideation will attempt suicide within their lifetimes.

Self-harm is behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. The term, also referred to as self-directed violence, encompasses both suicidal and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI), and self-harm with unclear intent. NSSI is distinguished from a suicide attempt or suicide because it does not include suicidal intent. NSSI is considered a significant risk factor for both suicide attempts and death by suicide and may or may not accompany suicidal ideation.

References: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): *Treatment for Suicidal Ideation, Self-harm, and Suicide Attempts Among Youth*. SAMHSA Publication No. PEP20-06-01-002 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020.

REPORTING

Direct - If any individual directly expresses feelings, actions, inclinations, or verbal communication related to suicide or self harm to a leader, or a leader witnesses something concerning, respond based on their developmental age:

Younger Children:

- Remain calm
- Get help: tell an appropriate ministry leader
- National Suicide Prevention Line for suicidal incidents 800-273- 8255
- Complete an incident report
- Inform parents/guardians of the incident and offer support

Teens:

- Remain calm.
- Ask the youth directly if he or she is thinking about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking of suicide?").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being and avoid being accusatory.
- Listen.
- Reassure them that there is help.
- Do not judge.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm.
- Get help: No one should ever agree to keep a youth's suicidal thoughts a secret and instead should tell an appropriate ministry leader.

- Complete an incident report
- Parents/Guardian will be informed of the incident by the ministry leader and helped to foster support for students.

Indirect - another youth or source expresses knowledge or suspicions related to a youth's suicidal or self-harming behavior

- Remain calm and affirm the reporting youth for sharing.
- Ask directly "how / what happened to reveal this?"
- Listen.
- Reassure them that there is help.
- Do not judge.
- Get help: inform ministry leaders or another leader
- Complete an incident report
- Encourage the reporting individual to have the youth reach out to a parent, leader, or ministry leader directly.
- Inform the reporting individual that leaders and ministry will follow up with the youth and parents directly.
- Contact the parents of the youth immediately
- National Suicide Prevention Line for advice 800-273- 8255

Safety Committee

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for youth, BE Free Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet a minimum twice yearly.

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable BE Free Church Ministries to carry out appropriate activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members but not limited to:

- the Director of Children's Ministries
- a member of the Elder Board
- a member of the church body with relevant experience and expertise

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

Applying and communicating existing BE Free Church policies and procedures related to youth's safety and risk management issues.

Monitoring all Youth Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.

Making recommendations to the BE Free Church Board of Elders regarding safety issues.

Report regularly to the Elder Board

Reporting annually to the church membership at the BE Free Church annual meeting

Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

BUILDING SAFETY AND SUPERVISION

Every ministry area leader is responsible for ensuring that the utilized areas (indoors and outdoors) are monitored and supervised during programming that serves youth. This may include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and youth . All youth should be easily observable during regular programming, class or activity. When working with youth ages 5 and up:

The “Rule of Three” will be followed at all times

No ministry staff or volunteer may be alone with an individual youth in a closed room or unobserved space at any time. . At least three people — one adult and two youths (ages 5 and up), or two adults and one youth — must present in any given space or during any activity.

NURSERY

Two trained, screened volunteers/staff should supervise children at all times

If two individuals serving in the nursery are related to one another, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member must be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take them to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

If you need to talk with a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you. After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

PLAYGROUNDS

On the playground, remember to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures.) Any two children together in an unseen or less visible space should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

Safety Measures

VOLUNTEER TO YOUTH RATIOS

BE Free Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Youth Ministries programs.

Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed:

Nursery:	2 workers per 8 children
Preschool (ages 2 &3)	2 workers per 12 children
Preschool (ages 4 & 5)	2 workers per 18 children
Elementary	2 workers per 20 children
Sports and Art Camp	2 workers per 20 children
Middle/High School	
1 - 29 teens	at least 2 staff members or volunteers
30+ teens	at least 3 staff members or volunteers

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the ministry area leader. Ministry area leaders will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately correct the supervision ratios into alignment with BE Free Church policy.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Youth ministry volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their ministry area leader, or a member of the pastoral staff before releasing the child.

Disciplinary Policies

DISCIPLINE

It is the BE Free Church's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of youth . No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors. It is unacceptable to yell at, grab, humiliate or threaten a youth . Always follow through on your word. Never discuss a youth's misbehaviors with a parent in front of others.

Appropriate responses to misbehaviors include:

- Redirect: calmly asking the youth to stop the behavior, and clearly state the appropriate correct behavior required.
- Time Out: if misbehavior is repeated: guide the youth to a quiet place, separate from but in sight of the larger group, for a short but designated period of time.
- Engage Support: if misbehavior continues repeatedly, refer to a staff member. The staff member may inform the parent or guardian, who may be asked to assist in redirecting the misbehavior. Uncomfortable, uncontrollable, or unusual behavior should be reported to parents and ministry area leaders.

In the event of a fight or physical altercation between two youths, verbally redirect those involved and avoid physical intervention unless necessary for the safety of other students. In these instances, staff members and leaders are allowed to restrain a youth with appropriate physical force, as needed.

If a youth's behavior endangers themselves or others, parents will be contacted to pick them up and they may be prohibited from attending certain ministry events in future. Exclusion from activities is an undesirable outcome, and every effort must be made to work with the parents and youth to create a solution that maintains the integrity of the program and allows the young person to participate in a safe and appropriate manner.

BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in BE Free Church ministry programs. At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, inform ministry area leaders, and write an incident report.

First Offense: Issue a warning to the individual and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is inappropriate.

Second Offense: Pull the offending individual(s) from the group (in a seen or supervised location) and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals. Let them know that the next step is communication with a pastor and their parents. Notify an immediate supervisor of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.

Check in with the targeted individual who may have been bullied to ensure emotional and physical safety.

Third Offense: Send the offending party to a pastor or ministry area leader for immediate communication with his or her parents and possible removal from the activity or event. Complete an incident report.

Restroom Policies

NURSERY CHILDREN (INCLUDING TOILET TRAINING AGE)

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

DIAPERING

Only adult nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.

Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers and the bathroom door should be kept completely open.

Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.

Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration forms ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")

Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

Children should be changed on changing stations only.

TOILET TRAINING

Only adult nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.

When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open; a single nursery worker should assist if a child requires toileting help.

Young children who are toilet training will never be left unattended in bathrooms.

Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the

nursery will be recorded on the BE Free Kids Registration Form (“Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”)

Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.

“Accidents” should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra diapers are available from BE Free Church in the children’s area, if the parent has not furnished such.

CHILDREN AGES 4 AND UP

If you must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another worker to accompany you. If another worker is not available, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. Do not enter the restroom.

If a child requires immediate assistance, leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his or her toileting activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

If restroom use is required:

Only trained, screened adult volunteers will assist children in the restroom.

Only one child at a time in a single toilet facility.

When a volunteer is assisting a child, the door must not be locked, and must remain ajar. In general, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Encourage children to do all they can for themselves.

All students in PreK - Grade 1 must be escorted to the restroom by a leader. 2nd grade students and up may go to restrooms unescorted.

Be aware if a student repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Communicate this behavior to a ministry area leader and parent/legal guardian if it occurs.

A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone child to the restroom.

OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS

Be aware if an older child or teen repeatedly leaves to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Parents should provide specific diapering instructions to staff members or volunteers for children up through age 4 with disabilities.. Parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of any individuals over age 4 requiring such assistance. If an individual over age 4 requires assistance using the restroom, a specially trained volunteer may assist them in the restroom.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers in BE Free Church's Ministries 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 determine an appropriate approach for arrangements of showering or changing clothes which will allow for the privacy of all individuals involved to be maintained.

Tobacco/Marijuana Use/Intoxicants

BE Free Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco or marijuana products in church facilities, while in the presence of youth or their parents, or during BE Free Church activities or programs. BE Free Church is a tobacco-free and marijuana-free facility inside and on walkways.

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or marijuana or any illegal drugs while in any BE Free Church facility, while traveling with youth, or while working with or supervising them. In addition, Ministry area leaders may suspend the activities of any volunteer if a legal, prescribed medication produces inappropriate behaviors.

Medication / First Aid

Medication may only be administered by trained staff, with written permission from parents or guardians. Otherwise, do not administer medication of any kind to any youth while serving in ministry programs, including 'over the counter' drugs.

Basic First Aid can be administered as needed with a communication to both parents and BE Free Church through an Incident Report.

Guidelines for Interactions with Youth of all ages

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

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

Meeting the emotional or spiritual needs of youth may occasionally involve interaction on an individual basis. This may be conducted in a public space, at a distance from the larger group which allows for private conversation without isolation from view.

Any ongoing meetings with youth (such as counseling, one-to-one discipleship, etc.) should be discussed with parents or guardians as well as a Ministry Leader, and should comply with the Rule of Three OR occur in a public, easily observed location.

Leaders may not date (or have *any* sort of romantic interaction with) youth regardless of age difference.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIAL

Staff members and volunteers of BE Free Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or teens.

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 ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to dating, sex and human sexuality.

These lessons will convey the church's views on these topics.

Youth may have questions/struggles in this area and desire to confide in a trusted adult leader for guidance.

Proceed with great caution, teach with sensitivity and from a biblical perspective.

If a youth's questions or comments on a sexual matter become too detailed or explicit in a group setting, the leader should use discretion and set up another time to meet.

For any follow up meeting: inform a Ministry Leader first, comply with the Rule of Three and meet in a public, easily observed location.

When in doubt as to whether a conversation could be interpreted as a "sexually oriented conversation," treat the conversation as such and follow this policy.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

BE Free Church promotes a positive, nurturing environment which prioritizes protecting youth at all times.

Physical contact should be for the benefit of the youth, and not be based upon the emotional needs of a Leader or volunteer.

Your personal behavior must foster trust at all times.

Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant youth except in cases of necessary restraint for the protection of the youth or others.

A demonstrated or expressed preference *not* to be touched must be respected.

Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of others.

RESTRICTED BEHAVIOR:

- A sexual/romantic relationship with a minor is never acceptable.
- Never touch sensitive areas (breasts, buttocks, genitals) even in cases of an injury in one of these areas. Never allow casual contact in these areas, under or over clothing.
- No sitting on laps for any youth ages 4 or older
- No hand-holding, unless part of a worship/prayer service or a group game.
- Never touch in anger or disgust.
- Never touch in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
- Avoid touching a youth between the navel and the knees.
- Never kiss youth , or give (or receive) a massage.
- Never place hands beneath a youth's clothing to play, rub, or comfort.
- Never tickle, participate in 'horse-play' or wrestle with a youth .

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

All communication with youth must be above reproach and indicative of healthy boundaries. As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the ministry leader or a parent. All communication between youth and leaders should be transparent and can be reviewed by ministry leaders at any time.

TEXTING/DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

- Texts or other digital messages should occur in 'group' form, whenever possible.
- Prudent judgment must be used in both timing and content.
- Do not text before 7am or after 10pm.
- Do not share photos and/or videos of a sexual or suggestive nature.
- Avoid discussion of any sexual topic via texts.

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

As a representative of Christ and a member of the BE Free ministry team, maintain a high moral standard in your social media presence. Inappropriate social media content may be a basis for suspension from participation in youth ministry at BE Free Church.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Please dress in suitable attire as a role model to youth .

TRANSPORTATION

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 :

- Youth should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided.
- The Rule of Three must be maintained throughout the entire transportation process (i.e. one adult cannot drop off or pick up youth at separate locations, creating a period of 1-on-1 time in the vehicle.)
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with youth while in vehicles.
- Hands free devices only may be utilized by the driver while driving BE Free Church vehicles, or vehicles owned or rented or driving for a BE Free Church event.
- All drivers of BE Free Church events should have a valid and current driver's license, active insurance, and drivers history.

- Drivers are responsible to communicate a change in driver's status promptly

OUT-OF-PROGRAM CONTACT WITH YOUTH

Friendships that develop among the families of BE Free volunteers and families of the youth they serve are a mutual blessing and a natural outcome of the fellowship shared in church body life. It is not the policy of BE Free Church to hinder or discourage any Christ-centered relationships that develop between church families. However, as representatives of BE Free Church, all ministry volunteers should respect the following policies, for the benefit of all involved:

- Any dating or sexual relationship of any kind between an adult volunteer and a youth is strictly prohibited.
- Prior relationships between teens and youth ministry volunteers may exist and should be clarified with Ministry Leaders before starting Youth Ministry and with parent permission.
- If overnight activities occur between families, these should be conducted in a manner that is "above reproach", with ample safe guards and boundaries in place to ensure all parties are protected. Reach out to a Ministry Leader for guidance if there is any question regarding the appropriateness of a planned activity.

PLANNING EVENTS

When planning a group event outside of regular programming, volunteer leaders should keep parents and church leadership informed of details and abide by BE Free Church policies. Some events may require a release form.

OVERNIGHT EVENTS

Some youth ministry activities/events require overnight sleeping arrangements for students, staff members and volunteers (i.e. camp, mission trips, etc.). All programmed overnights must be approved by a ministry supervisor and receive permission from parents.

No overnights are allowed on BE Free Church property unless part of a ministry-sponsored event

Guidelines for Ministering to Adults with Physical or Developmental Disabilities

BE Free Church is committed to treating all vulnerable individuals, including adults with mental or physical disabilities, with dignity, respect, and compassion. All interactions should prioritize the individual's well-being, personal boundaries, and inclusion in a safe and supportive environment. Clear and consistent communication between the ministry volunteers and the primary caregiver is essential and the "Rule of Three" should be followed at all times. Depending on the nature and degree of an individual's disabilities, it may be necessary for the primary caregiver to remain with the individual at all times.

Parental Involvement

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

Parents will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, demonstrates concerning behavior, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in ministry programs.

Sports and Art Camp

BE Free Sports and Art Camp is a special outreach event designed to engage and bless the local community. This high energy, gospel-centered outreach ministers to over 100 children and their families in a public display of Christ's body at work. Staffing for this event requires special consideration to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all and to maintain the highest standards as we represent Christ to our community. For Sports and Art Camp the following policies will be adhered to:

HEAD COACHES

Individuals must be age 18 or older, regularly attend BE Free Church for one year*, complete the full screening process, background check, sexual abuse awareness training, sign and follow the BE Free Safety Policy.

Head coaches should have in-depth experience and physical ability to coach the given sport (or activity), experience teaching Bible lessons and leading prayer times, and spiritual maturity to oversee and mentor both junior counselors and campers. Head Coaches should be able to collaborate with and delegate responsibilities to assistant coaches to effectively supervise a large group of children. They are expected to attend multiple camp planning and training sessions prior to the week of camp. Head Coaches understand that there may be Junior Counselors under their supervision who have little or no experience in such a role, and/or minimal biblical knowledge and will require guidance and mentoring in order to succeed. It is anticipated that all Head Coaches recognize the eternal impact of their ministry to their junior counselors as well as their campers.

ASSISTANT COACHES

Assistant Coaches are required to meet all the same safety and screening criteria as Head Coaches, including pre-training sessions. Assistant Coaches collaborate closely with the Head Coach and may run drills, supervise groups of campers and lead Bible time. Assistant Coaches contribute to the supervision and mentoring of Junior Counselors in their area and serve as supports and role models for the teens as well as the campers in their group.

JUNIOR COUNSELORS

Teens aged 13 -17, and entering 7th grade or above, may volunteer as junior counselors and will be assigned to a specific area of camp at the discretion of the Camp Director. The preferences, experience and skill of the teen will be taken into account, along with other factors in assigning a role in which they will be most successful. Junior counselors come under the direct supervision of the Head and Assistant Coaches in their area, assisting in all activities but never independently supervising campers at any time. Junior Counselors are expected to attend at least one training session prior to camp. The role of junior counselor is understood to be a learning experience in which teens are provided opportunities to develop leadership skills under the care and guidance of experienced adults. Teen volunteers for Sports and Art Camp are not required to attend BE Free Church and are expected to be under the direct supervision of BE Free Staff at all times.

VOLUNTEERS - OTHER AREAS

Individuals must be age 18 or older, regularly attend BE Free Church for one year*, complete the full screening process, background check, sexual abuse awareness training, sign and follow the BE Free Safety Policy. Volunteers will be assigned to roles as determined by the camp director, taking into account stated preferences, areas of special skill and staffing needs. All volunteers must attend at least

one training session prior to the start of camp. Camp volunteers not directly supervising children may serve in areas such as food service, registration, setup and cleanup, among others. These roles, while not directly engaging with child supervision are all part of the outreach to children and families and are vitally important components of sharing Christ with our community.

*The one year attendance policy may be waived for Sports Camp Coaches with approval of the BE Free Pastor or Elder Board if the individual has been a regular attendee at another local church and a letter of reference from that pastor is submitted.

DRAFT VERSION: AWAITING BOARD APPROVAL

BE Free Safety Agreement Form

Email befreekids@befreechurchct.com when this form is complete. This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to a Ministry Leader or mailbox.

I have received and read a copy of the BE Free Safety Policy and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving/working at BE Free Church. A digital manual copy may be found at <https://www.befreechurchct.com/kids-ministry>

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 voluntary/employment service at BE Free Church at any time (if possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to the ministry leader).

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 BE Free Church. 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 communicate any applicable changes in my life that may impact my role volunteering or working with children.

I acknowledge receipt of the BE Free Church Safety Policy manual.

Printed Name	
Signature	Date
Ministry Leader Printed Name	
Ministry Leader Signature	Date

Revised Aug. 2025