

STUDENT MINISTRY POLICIES

Safe Church Ministry Best Practices



SAFE
CHURCH

Souls Church Student Ministry Policy Guide

“To inspire our students to become fully engaged followers of Jesus.”

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Purpose of This Guide

This policy guide exists to create a **safe, consistent, and life-giving environment** for every student, family, and team member within our Student Ministry. These policies are designed to protect our students, all minors, equip volunteers, and ensure excellence in all areas of ministry.

1. Vision, Role & Team Expectations

Team Vision

To provide a safe, healthy and life-giving place where our teenager's faith is set in motion as they connect with God and one another, know their Bibles, serve God by joining a team, and learn a biblical worldview that sets their faith in motion!!!

Team Role

Allow the Holy Spirit to use you as you create an environment where kids learn hands-on about the Gospel, receive prayer, and hear about Jesus through media, music, and activities. We also support parents in planting seeds of hope and encouragement into their children.

TEAM REQUIREMENTS

- Must be 18 years of age or older to assist and out of high school.
- Adults (18+) must pass a background check and renew it every 18 months..

TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Every student team member is expected to adhere to the student team role description along with our policies and guidelines. In addition, please always do the following:

- **Event Familiarity.** Look at the upcoming event during the week and pray over the lesson and the students.
- **Celebrate Students.** Every time we gather is a time to celebrate and encourage our students; as this could be the highlight of their week. Continually show them Christ's love.
- **Stay Connected to the Weekend Messages.** You are an example to our students, so be present during the weekend services and make time during the week to listen to the sermon either at (www.soulschurch.org) or on the app, if you missed a service. This will help you stay connected to what is being preached, be encouraged yourself and grow in your own walk with Christ. What happens in our student ministry should be an overflow of what God is doing in your life.

Team Member Screening

The first step in preventing any issues or sexual misconduct is to thoroughly screen the backgrounds of employees and all student volunteers. Legitimate workers will not be offended, and the process often scares off unwanted individuals. To screen staff members and volunteers, organizations should take the following actions:

1. Three-Month Rule: Volunteers working with youth in our organization should attend our church for at least three months, go through our connect class membership process, or be well known to leadership in another way.
2. Application: All persons seeking to work with youth should complete and sign a volunteer (Dream Team) application. The application should request basic information from the applicant and inquire into previous experience with students, previous affiliation with organizations, reference and employment information and disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form should be kept confidential and on file.
3. Personal Interview: Upon completion of the application, an interview should be scheduled with the applicant to discuss not just the ability to accomplish the task, but his or her suitability for the position.
4. Reference Checks: Before an applicant is permitted to work with students or vulnerable individuals, at least two of the applicant's references should be checked. Ideally these should be professional references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children/students or vulnerable individuals in the past.
5. Criminal Background Check – After securing the proper permissions, a check of the National Sex Offender Registry as well as a criminal history for any county in which the applicant has lived for the previous seven years should be conducted for all employees, regardless of position, and for multiple categories of volunteers.

Student Ministry Training

All employees and student ministry volunteers should complete training on how to properly work with youth. 1. Our church will provide training on abuse identification and prevention policies to all new employees and volunteers. 2. Employees and volunteers should be trained on mandatory reporting requirements for our area. 3. Employees and volunteers should be trained on organizational policies and procedures.

TEAM ATTIRE

When you serve in a student event, wear your dream team lanyard so you are easily identifiable. Dress in a manner that honors Christ. What we wear can speak louder than what we say. Be mindful to not dress in a manner that would distract others or cause them to stumble. Use discretion, if you are not sure about your attire, wear something else.

TEAM POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Follow the policies and guidelines in place for leading minors. As a member of our student ministry, we ask that you abide by the policies we have in place for working with minors. These guidelines are in place to not only protect our students but also our volunteers on the dream team and provide a safe place to receive life-giving ministry.

2. General Guidelines and Expectations of Student Ministry Leaders

All who serve in the life of the church are called to use their position and power, not in ways that lord it over others or seek to control others, but in ways that are patterned after Christ himself. According to Philippians 2, Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage, but used his power for the thriving of others. These guidelines are designed to help ministry leaders steward their position and power well and cultivate cultures that resist abuse.

- A. Each ministry leader shall sign and commit to conducting themselves according to the Honor Code. The church office will keep a signed copy of the Honor Code for each ministry leader on file.
- B. All ministry staff leaders/pastors shall commit to participating in abuse of power training within 12 months of being hired as well as a refresher course every 3-5 years.
- C. All ministry staff leaders/pastors and adult volunteers will agree to a criminal background check at the beginning of their time of service. Background checks will be refreshed every 3 years.
- D. All ministry leaders, adult volunteers, and assistants must attend a yearly training session on the Safe Church Policy.
- E. Topics related to abuse prevention, healthy boundaries, and support for attendees will be addressed in the training.
- F. Felony convictions or indictable offenses are wide-ranging from theft, drug trafficking, physical or sexual assault, each with varying degrees of harm caused; the uniqueness and level of risk of each conviction should be carefully assessed should this person be given the privilege of doing ministry with those who are vulnerable. A person with a felony conviction may serve in ministry only with another approved adult present at all times.

- G. For those with a felony conviction to be considered as a volunteer, the following is required:
- a. A signed letter from a psychologist or counselor indicating that the person is not a danger to the community;
 - b. A covenant of accountability and support outlining the terms and conditions under which the person may volunteer.
- H. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to report any suspected abuse of a minor (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect) to the civil authorities. For more guidance, see “Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child/Student.”
- I. All ministry leaders and volunteer leaders are required to use their access to the church internet and technology belonging to the church (computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.) in ways that are legal, reflect godly conduct, and conform to network etiquette, laws and courtesies.
- J. Depending on the situation, the church may have funds available to provide financial support for counseling for those who have been victimized by abuse. For more information, speak to our Leadership Team or our Overseers Team.
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3. Allergy & Food Awareness

We want to provide a safe environment for all students by promoting awareness of food allergies, dietary restrictions, and food-related medical needs while participating in church-sponsored activities and events.

- Parents/guardians/students are responsible for informing the church of any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or medical conditions that may affect their student.
 - Allergy and medical information should be updated annually and whenever there is a change in the student's condition.
 - Parents are encouraged to provide any necessary emergency medications (such as epinephrine auto-injectors) according to the church's medication policy.
 - Upon registering for an event, fill out any known allergies or food allergies
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4. Appropriate Affection Policy

We are committed to a **positive, nurturing, and safe environment** that protects both students and Student Dream Team members. Clear boundaries help prevent misunderstandings and promote healthy interaction.

When creating safe boundaries for students, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise, that decision is left to each individual's discretion. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Dream Teamers to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with students. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Dream Team members, as well as staff, working around or with our students.

There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes or fist pumps
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Short touching of hands, faces, shoulders, and arms of students
- Arms around shoulders
- Sitting beside students
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with smaller students
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with students:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kissing students
- Holding students on your lap
- Touching knees or legs of students
- Wrestling with students
- Tickling students
- Piggyback rides
- Hugs from behind
- Any type of massage given by a student to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a student
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really good in those jeans.”

5. Background Check Policy

Souls Church is committed to providing a **safe and secure environment**. All volunteers must meet screening requirements. Souls Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its volunteers, staff, attendees, and community, so it's critical that SC volunteers have no history of criminal behavior relevant to their position. For this reason, SC has developed a volunteer screening policy and procedure.

Who Will Be Screened?

Criminal background checks are mandatory for volunteers every three years for those who work with all minors, the elderly, the disabled, and other vulnerable populations according to State law (Stat. Sec. 123B.03). Federal law (4 USC 13041 (a), (b), (c)) states that an employer may also consider any conviction that may bear upon an individual's fitness for working with students.

Souls Church requires a criminal background check for all volunteer applicants, over the age of 18, who will work with the above stated populations of under 18 years old and anyone who will be working with our first responder/security team.

Volunteer Applicant Rights

Anyone submitting to a criminal background check is guaranteed the following rights:

- Notice and consent prior to the background check
- Consent for minors under age 18 must be provided by parent/guardian (MN Statute 12238.03)
- Notice of negative information before an adverse action is taken (such as refusing a volunteer's application)
- A right to receive a copy of the report
- A right to appeal an adverse decision
- Minors, and legal guardians, must give informed consent regarding how information is used and with whom it is shared (MN Statute 1305 Subd 4)
- Proper safeguarding and disposal of information included in a report.

Volunteer Applicant Responsibility

Prospective volunteers must complete a Background Check Authorization Form. The following information will be collected from volunteers to initiate the screening process:

- First Name, Last Name, Middle Initial
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Address
- Alias, Maiden, or Previous Name
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Phone Number & Email Address

- History of Residence
- Signature authorizing permission to run the background check
- Response (Yes or No) to an arrest or conviction
- Response (Yes or No) to having any pending charges

It is important that any question regarding criminal history be answered completely and truthfully when completing the volunteer application or other required documents. Failure to do so shall be considered negligent or an intentional effort to conceal information and may result in the denial to serve as a volunteer.

Volunteer Qualification Criteria

Souls Church wants to be sure that every decision made about an individual's eligibility to volunteer is correct. SC will carefully consider all the information before any decisions are made that affect an individual's eligibility.

Upon finding a record that may result in an ineligible determination, SC will contact the volunteer to make certain all information provided is accurate. The volunteer's information will be investigated to confirm the accuracy of the information. Following the background check, each volunteer must meet with the Souls Kids Lead to go through a formal interview and upon their discretion, determination and best judgment, a decision will be made about becoming a certified kid's worker.

SC may consider the following factors before deciding whether or not to offer or deny acceptance as a volunteer:

- The length of time since a conviction
- The nature of the crime
- The relationship between the duties to be performed and the crime committed
- The number of convictions
- The relevant moral, ethical, legal and policy issues and principles
- Rehabilitation efforts
- Subsequent employment or volunteer history

Confidentiality Statement

All background check information will remain confidential. We will maintain strict physical, electronic, and procedural safeguards to protect this information. The records will remain in a personnel/volunteer record/file/database, until separation plus 3 years.

6. Bathroom Use Policy

The bathroom use policy and guidelines outlined here to be followed during any student event to provide a safe environment for all students while respecting privacy and maintaining appropriate supervision.

The key principle is: **"Monitor the area, not the restroom."**

- No adult should ever be in a bathroom or a stall with a student.
- Students should use the restroom before the start of the event whenever possible.
- Students may use the restroom as needed during ministry activities.
- No adult should ever be in a bathroom stall with a student.
- Adult leaders should remain outside the restroom area unless there is an emergency or safety concern.
- If assistance or intervention is required, two screened adult leaders should be involved whenever possible.
- Students should notify a leader before leaving an activity area to use the restroom.
- If there is an outdoor activity, students should be escorted to the restroom by a volunteer.
- Students are encouraged to use the restroom individually unless a specific situation requires otherwise.
- Leaders should be aware of students' whereabouts and note extended absences.
- Students must respect the privacy of others in bathrooms at all times.
- Horseplay, vandalism, inappropriate behavior, or use of phones/cameras in restrooms is strictly prohibited.
- Any concerns regarding safety, bullying, or inappropriate conduct should be reported immediately to a ministry leader.

Bathroom Use at Large Student Gatherings

- Additional supervision may be provided in restroom and hallway areas.
- Leaders should conduct periodic hallway checks while respecting student privacy.
- Restroom use should follow all church and facility-specific guidelines.

7. Cell Phone Use During Event (Guidelines)

We know that most students have a cell phone for communicating with the parents but it can also be a distraction during our life group and large group times. Cell phone use is not recommended by students during either of those times and should be kept in their pockets, bags or purses during both small group and large group. We do allow them to use it during hang time, however.

During certain times of the year or at certain events, we will encourage the students to use their phones and social media to capture images and tag us on them. This is the exception, not the rule.

We will be very intentional about communicating these times with them. During retreats, especially, we think it is important to be present at the retreat and not be communicating with those that are not there. We ask that the students unplug as much as possible and encourage them to engage with those around rather than on their phone.

It is encouraged for student to pull up the bible app on their phone. It is encouraged that they take notes and can use their phones to do so.

Like a lot of our guidelines, we are not going to limit dream teamers to what or when they can use their phones. We ask that they limit it during life group and large group time so that they can lead by example. If they are using their phones during the service, we ask that it be intentional use focused on the message, the topics, or the Bible verses being presented. We encourage volunteers to take pictures at specific times and also throughout the year and post to their social media accounts. We do ask that they make sure that Souls Church social media policy is being followed.

8. Child/Student Protection Policy

We will uphold the integrity of security and safety within our Student Ministry to the highest level, by creating an environment where adults feel confident in dropping off and picking up their students and where students feel safe to be in the space.

To best safeguard our Student Ministry, we practice the following Child/Student Protection Policies and Guidelines:

Two-Adult Rule or Rule of Three:

At least two, unrelated (not family members), screened adults must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

The Rule of Three:

When there is not a capacity to abide by the Two-Adult Rule, it may be acceptable to use the The Rule of Three: At least three individuals must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. One of the three must be a screened adult. When the Rule of Three is used, there must be another unrelated screened adult volunteer nearby or in proximity monitoring the group. Additionally, there should be a clear and unobstructed view into the room/space where the supervision is taking place.

- If a volunteer happens to witness inappropriate touching or questionable behavior by other staff or volunteers, volunteers must promptly intervene as appropriate and must report such instances to the Ministry Lead, Guardians/First Responders Lead or member of the Leadership Team, or report it to the Safe Church Committee.

Release of Students During an Event

- Only approved parents are allowed to pick up their students during a service/event or following a service.

Release of Information

- Under no circumstance are we allowed to release attendance history of any student to anyone.
- Any Report (Behavior, Accident/Injury, Maltreatment Form, etc.) that is filled out, should never be given out. If a copy is requested, redirect the request to the Guardians Team, who will connect with the Director of Guardians (security).

9. Discipline & Behavior Policy:

When youth act out during church events, ministry leaders and volunteers will take care to address the misbehavior in ways that are consistent with the following guidelines:

- Corporal punishment is not permitted (spanking, pinching, hitting, etc.)
- Parents are to be informed whenever a youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or if a pattern of misbehavior develops.
- An aide or parent should be involved in classrooms where misbehavior is an ongoing problem.
- Appropriate types of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers/staff annually.
- Whenever possible, leaders should address disruptive behavior by:
 - Redirecting - the youth by gently reminding them of our expectations. We guide them by asking for the behavior we would like to see. "It's time to listen to the main group leader, let's focus on the activity together." This can help the child/youth focus on a more acceptable behavior.
 - Reposition - If the behavior continues and is affecting the safety of the other students or the learning environment, we may offer the student a chance to reset by moving them to another spot. This gives the student a fresh opportunity to engage positively in the group.
 - Remove - if the behavior persists, we will take the student aside in a supportive and positive way, and have a 1:1 conversation with the student to understand what is

going on, and offer guidance. At this point, we will decide if we will have them return to the group or if their grown-up should be contacted.

Questions to ask the youth/student:

- “Can you help me understand what happened? Why do you think we are out talking?”
- “What are the expectations we follow here? Can you share what you remember?”
- “How do you feel about what happened? What could we do differently next time?”
- “Is there anything going on you’d like to talk about or share about?”
- “Before we go back into the room, here are the expectations (state the expectations) - can you abide by this? We can go back in when you are ready to (state expectation.)”
 - Record - if we determine the student cannot return to the event/room, please follow the “request assistance” procedures and let the Ministry Lead know so they are aware.

Note: The Student Ministry Lead or one designated by the ministry lead should be the one talking with the student’s parent/guardian:

- Build trust by getting to know the student and the family
- Be mindful of body language before diving in
- Choose to remain calm and in a quiet place for the discussion, not in the hallway
- Start by sharing something positive about the student, even if it's about them coming to church
- Avoid labeling or diagnosing the student with something
- Ask for the parents' insights and suggestions on how to support their student
- If needed, ask a team member to help with the conversation
- Be mindful of where the student is present in the conversation; in that case, include them in the conversation. It would be helpful to have the conversation with the parent privately.

Suggested speaking points (for the Student Ministry Lead):

- “Today, (student’s name) had some difficulty following the rule/expectation of _____.”
- We really want (student’s name) to feel safe and welcome in our youth ministry. We’d love to have them join us next week, but we think it would be best for them to take a break for the rest of today (or next week.)
- “Next time, we hope to see them make progress and improvement, and whatever we can do to help that happen, we are here to support them and you.”

After the Student Ministry Lead has had a conversation with a parent, document that we had a conversation with the parents.

10. Electronic Communication (Social Media Messaging, Email, or Texting):

Electronic communication (email and texts) and use of social media has become the preferred means for communication for many people, especially youth. While seeking to use technology to encourage good connections between ministry leaders/volunteers and youth, it is also important to provide guidelines that safeguard youth from potential abuse.

To that end, all ministry staff leaders and volunteers will abide by the following Electronic Communication and Social Media Usage policy in their interactions with youth...

1. Communication should not take place with young people between the hours of 10:00 pm and 7:00 am, unless in an emergency.
2. Emails, messages, texts, or phone calls should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
3. Ongoing conversations or lengthy personal communications should not be done through email or text, or must include a parent on the text message for any communication with a student under age 18.
4. If a digital communication raises any child protection concerns, the staff or volunteer will inform their ministry direct report.
5. When a volunteer leaves a ministry involving youth due to misconduct of any kind, staff should request that this volunteer not contact any youth - and that all youth contact information must be removed from that adult volunteer's devices (if applicable.)

11. Pastoral Visitation/Student Care

Formal pastoral care by a youth/student leader is carried out by church representatives - on behalf of the church community. Such care is an important ministry of the church and student ministry, reflecting the love, compassion, and presence of Christ to those who participate in the ministries of the church. Some forms of pastoral care involve one-on-one visitation, such as with those who are experiencing a time of suffering or grief, with those who are housebound, or with those in the hospital. In these cases, pastoral visits are made to offer spiritual friendship, help, support, and contact with the community of faith. These visits may include practical help, giving information, and/or supporting people as they make difficult decisions. Listening well is fundamental to all good pastoral care.

The following guidelines are provided to ensure safe and healthy practices of pastoral visitation:

1. Pastoral care visits should be conducted in the morning, afternoon, or early evening – but we understand this very situational.
2. If a pastoral care visit puts you in a position of being alone 1:1 with a student during a hospital visit, text or call a member of the Lead Team (or designated person) before and after the visit.
3. All pastoral care visits will honor the limits of their role in giving care, referring congregants as the situation requires to the services of counselors, spiritual directors, and others who are better trained and resourced to meet a congregant's needs.
4. The Lead Team and Elders are responsible for overseeing that risk is being assessed and these pastoral care guidelines are properly adhered to.

12. Responding to Any Abuse or Suspected Abuse

The following steps are to be followed in cases of suspected abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.

1. All ministry leaders/volunteers who have a reasonable suspicion of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult are responsible to report it to their ministry lead, our Lead Pastor and to the Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society 24-hour hotline within 24 hours. If you are uncertain of whether what you heard or saw constitutes evidence of abuse, consult with a member of Souls Church Leadership Team Member.
2. If a minor or vulnerable adult is in immediate physical danger (either on church property or off the property) then the police (911) should be notified immediately.
3. The ministry leader/volunteer who suspects abuse should fill out an incident report (Accident or Incident Report) in order to record their observations and follow-up actions. This documentation will be kept confidential.
4. The ministry leader/volunteer will leave all investigative tasks to the police and/or CPS.
5. Inform the lead pastor and oversight (church overseers, elder or lead team member) of the concerns or allegations of abuse. Note that confidentiality is important in all cases of abuse but especially when a minor is involved: Confidentiality for protecting confidentiality and need-to-know reporting).

6. If the abuse happened during a church/ministry-sponsored activity or by a ministry leader/volunteer, in addition to ensuring that the police and/or CPS/CAS have been contacted, the Leadership Team shall notify the church's insurance agent and legal counsel.
7. Together with the pastor and the leadership team, develop a plan for responding to the abuse in ways that provide care for the one who has been victimized by abuse and respects the dignity of all involved. The plan will include:
 - a. Putting the ministry leader on administrative leave with or without pay (or suspending a volunteer) for up to 90 days or until the conclusion of the investigation, whichever is sooner.
 - b. Providing support and care for the minor and their family. This should be done in a way that puts the needs of the minor and his/her family first.
 - c. Determining who will be the primary contact with the police and/or CPS/CAS.
 - d. Determining how to deal with media inquiries.
8. After the accused has been contacted by the authorities and the investigation is underway, church leadership will work under the direction of legal counsel on appropriate next steps.
9. If the accused is found guilty or admits guilt, church leadership will work under the direction of legal counsel on appropriate next steps.
10. Should the determined abuser be an office bearer, church leadership will follow the specifications for admonition and discipline in the church bylaws, and work under the direction of legal counsel on appropriate next steps.
11. Subject to the best interest of the person victimized by abuse, church leadership will work under the direction of legal counsel and should notify the congregation in writing if they conclude that a church leader has perpetrated abuse. This notice should protect the identity and confidentiality of any innocent parties, including the person who was victimized by abuse. This written communication should be pastoral, succinct, and objectively factual. Referencing public police reports, charges, or court verdicts may be used.
12. If law enforcement decides not to investigate or charge an adult leader of the congregation who has been accused of abusing a child or vulnerable adult, an independent investigation should be considered in consultation with legal counsel.

13. Social Media usage:

1. Ministry staff/volunteers may use images a youth/student for ministry promotional purposes with written consent of the parents and only in ways that protect the value and dignity of those pictured.
 2. While direct 1:1 social media messages should be avoided between youth and volunteer leaders, communication can occur openly through comments and posts on the page.
 3. Church events can be posted on the page.
 4. Church volunteers are forbidden to post or distribute personal identifiable information of any student under the age of eighteen. When posting online of students under the age of 18, please use initials only. Personal identifiable information includes but is not limited to: full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a student or that would jeopardize their safety or well-being in any way.
 5. As an exception to this policy, a student whose parent or other legally responsible adult has signed may be identified by name in photographs or videos posted to an official social media account.
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14. Student Check-In & Check-Out (at events)

Check In: All students must be registered for an event. Parents/guardians/students must register and authorize the permission release for minors participation for each student event. Ministry leaders will inform parents of relevant policies either via a letter or a parent meeting, or if registration for events does not happen. Ministry leaders will introduce themselves to new families or students/parents you do not know by fist pumps or hand shakes (if appropriate).

- During student events, group leaders should know where the youth are at all times.
- If a young person leaves an event without permission, the parents/guardian will be called immediately.

Check Out: Upon leaving an event, our intention is for all students to notify the ministry check out team member they are leaving and the ministry team will check off the student is leaving the event.

15. Transportation Policy

Guidelines for transportation during student ministry or at any church event:

Any person who transports a youth for any church sponsored event must be 21 or older, have a current Volunteer Driver Form and a copy of current insurance and driver's license on file.

To transport children or youth, there must be an adequate safety belt for each passenger and they will be worn any time the car is moving.

Transportation by one adult leader of one minor should always be avoided. We must have the Two-Adult rule or Rule of Three followed.

In the event that it is unavoidable, the following provisions must take place:

- A clear consent from the parents/guardians of the youth is received;
- A clear communication with the youth director or designated volunteer leader when the adult leader leaves with the child or youth;
- A clear communication notifying the staff that the child/youth arrived safely and is no longer under their care or supervision.

Set up alternative driving arrangements to have the parent drop off their student and pick them up once the event is done, with appropriate sign-off and release forms completed.

Final Statement

These policies are in place to ensure that **Student Ministry remains a safe, secure, and life-giving environment** for every student and volunteer. Every team member is expected to understand, follow, and uphold these standards at all times.

As an essential part of the Souls Church Dream Team family, I know I now have the opportunity to turn a personal decision to follow Jesus into a public opportunity to serve others for Jesus! This new platform will not only bless others in the process, but grow your servants heart. To be the most effective, we ask you to make two primary commitments as a dream team member...

As a Christian and a team member, my life should always be a reflection of Jesus in all that we say and do. Being a member of the Dream Team does not require perfection, but with God's grace and truth – I will walk the Jesus path everyday, endeavoring to live my life with the help of the Holy Spirit in a biblical way that honors God in everything seen and unseen, and in all that I say and do. Personal time in God's word, prayer, consistent church attendance, godly habits and behaviors, and biblical community, serving in any way I can so I can grow into an even more engaged follower of Jesus and member of my team.

Appendix A: Signs and Symptoms of Student Abuse – School Age

Note: Students rarely exhibit just one sign indicating that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes, or the after-effect of other kinds of trauma in their lives. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of any symptoms because of the student's ability to mask or deny what is very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several symptoms appearing at once *may* be an indication of abuse.

- Complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom; smearing feces on walls or objects
- Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck; failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort; hiding bruises
- Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences
- Poor concentration in classroom; inability to focus
- Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing
- Engaging in self-injury, engaging in excessive masturbation or masturbation in a public setting
- Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction
- Shyness or fear about physical touch
- Exhibiting sexual behavior beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children/students or adults
- Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations; bullying others
- Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
- Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
- Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events because of being punished
- Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism
- Hyper-vigilance, excessive and suspicious watching of other people; easily startled
- Preoccupation with fire and setting fires
- Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight

Appendix B: Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse from a Student

For informational purposes, the following set of guidelines pertains to information that a student may wish to disclose to an adult.

1. If a student asks to talk with you at church, provide a room (with a window) in which to speak privately, ask if you could have another leader present.
2. Listen carefully to what the student tells you and respond in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner. Disclosing abuse is a scary thing for students, and they need to know they are supported.
3. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the student's story, since this may cause the student to stop talking or to believe you are upset with him or her.
4. Avoid asking leading questions. Examples of what you could say: "Can you tell me more?" "Is there anything you need to add?" Do not try to convince the student that the story isn't true or that it didn't happen the way he or she reports it did.
5. Do not attempt to assess the truthfulness of the student's disclosure—that will be for trained professionals to decide. Assure the student you believe him/her and that you care about him/her.
6. Tell the student that whatever happened was not his or her fault and reassure the student that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
7. Do not tell or suggest to the student that he or she has been abused.
8. Reassure the student that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
9. Do not promise **not** to tell anyone. Tell the student that you need to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
10. Do not frighten the student by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint. Instead, share with the student that other people need to know what happened and that they will talk to the student later.
11. Do not ask the student to show you any bruises that are beneath the student's underwear or clothing; observe only those bruises that are accessible.
12. If you feel comfortable doing so, speak to the student and offer support in the following weeks and months.
13. Document and date your conversation and meeting with the student.

Appendix C: Confidentiality

In order to protect the dignity and well-being of any person who has been victimized by abuse, it is important that their identity is kept confidential. The following measures are implemented to protect the privacy of all parties and to ensure that information about any alleged act is limited to essential persons:

- A. Need-to-Know: Those positions in the need-to-know category include the following: lead pastor, the pastoral care elders for the claimant and accused, and possibly law enforcement and the church's legal counsel.
- B. Situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults require sensitive care and full transparency with law enforcement investigations. In situations of abuse involving minors or vulnerable adults, please contact our lead pastors, or an elder or an overseer who consult the appropriate authorities.
- C. The names and information in any abuse allegations shall be limited to the positions listed in paragraph A. Need to Know on this page. Any request to release names of any involved party must be first cleared by the congregation's legal counsel.
- D. Discussion by the Leadership Team and Elders shall be conducted without the actual names of involved persons being used. Instead, descriptions such as "reporter", "alleged offender", and "claimant" shall be used.
- E. A liaison between the legal authorities or Child Protective Services/Children's Aid Society and the church lead team/staff will be appointed.
- F. After law enforcement has officially charged someone of a crime or after a legal decision has been made, there will be a communication outlining ways that the church and community may be able to move forward with respect and responsible ways to process the harm within the congregation and community, and directed from the church's legal counsel.