

Frequently Asked Questions

Teen Ministry

We care about your students and want them to have the best experience while a part of the Teen Ministry at Saint Matthew. Here are answers to many frequently asked questions about our youth ministry policies. Saint Matthew Lutheran Church has implemented policies that will safeguard our teenagers while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them.

Attending Our Ministry

We love when students bring friends or when a new family wants to check out our ministry. Any student is allowed to come to check out our ministry and see if they want to be a part of it. For a student who attends at least semi-regularly we ask parents to fill out the teen registration form (found at www.saintmatthew.org) so that we have parent contact, emergency contact and medical information.

Team Leadership

Whenever possible a teenager will not be in the primary care of only one staff member. Teams of staff members (preferably male and female) will supervise activities. This policy has three purposes: it provides for more than one staff member to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision; it protects staff from unfounded allegations; and it lessens the possibility of a staff member becoming a “lone ranger” who thrives on the dependency of teenagers—as well as keeping a staff member from having an undue influence over an individual teenager.

Adult to Student Ratio

At least two adults will supervise all activities. If the participants are male and female, then male and female staff members must be present.

- For our weekly gathering the adult to student ratio averages 1:5
- For our trips, all-nighter, & other events our adult to student ratio is not less than 1:8

Volunteer Youth Leaders

All volunteer youth leaders have been screened or interviewed by the teen ministry staff before becoming leaders. All leaders over 18 have been screened which includes a background check. All youth leaders must follow a series of guidelines. If you would like a copy of this, please ask us.

- ***Middle school leaders***

We have a mix of leaders, including high school students (sophomore and up) and adult leaders. All small groups have two leaders. For our trips and outings we have an adult to student ratio of 1:8 with some high school leaders as extra help.

- ***High school Leaders***

All high school leaders are at least one year past high school.

Transportation

Only licensed and insured individuals who are over 21 are able to drive youth during church related activities. Youth may drive to and from an event at the parent's discretion, but may not drive during the event. Vehicles transporting youth must have the adequate number of seatbelts for youth traveling in that vehicle. Seatbelts are to be worn any time the vehicle is in motion. Drivers must always use precaution when driving youth and must consistently drive in a safe manner.

When driving teenagers home, male staff members will transport male teenagers and female staff members will transport female teenagers.

Rental Vehicles can only be driven by licensed and insured individuals who are over 25.

Music

All music played at events must be appropriate and void of any rude language or sexual innuendos

Movies

Middle School Ministry, movies can be rated G or PG. For the High School Ministry, movies can be rated G, PG or PG-13. If an R rated movie is shown (ex: the Passion of the Christ) each teenager under 17-years of age needs to have a permission slip signed by their parent/guardian BEFORE the movie is shown.

Language

Appropriate language must be used by both students and staff.

Drugs and Alcohol

No drugs (including but not limited to: marijuana, vape pens, e-cigarettes, or the likes) or alcohol are allowed at any youth event. If drugs or alcohol are found, the items will be confiscated and the student sent home.

Weapons

No weapons of any kind are allowed at any youth event. If any weapon is found it will be confiscated and the student will be sent home.

Cell Phones

We want students to connect and fellowship with each other and not to be distracted by their phone.

- ***Weekly gatherings***

Cell phones are allowed during the first part of the gathering during hang out time. Once the gathering officially starts we ask that cell phones be put away. If a student is using or has a cell phone out, the leader will ask to hold on to it until the end of the gathering.

- ***Overnighters***

We ask students to put phones away. Collection of cell phones is at the leader's discretion and cell phones may be held until the end of the event.

- ***Trips, Camps, Retreats, and Mission Trips***

Students are not allowed to have cell phones on retreats (unless special permission is given). If students are found to have their cell phone on a retreat or trip, it will be held by the leader until the end of the event. If you need to get ahold of a student please talk to a leader prior to the event to make arrangements. We provide the Ministry Leaders contact info for each event and maintain a list in the office.

Counseling and Hanging Out

Our leaders value each student and at times may attend student's games and/or activities, or meet with them off campus to catch up or discuss what's going on in life. We think this is awesome and encourage our leaders to do so, but have established guidelines to protect the student and the leader.

Team counseling and hang outs are preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions or hang outs are not possible, leaders will ask for the parents/guardians permission. Counseling and hang outs should be done in a public space where private conversations are possible, but occur in full view of others. Female staff should counsel females and male staff should counsel males.

Social Media // Leaders may contact students via social media. Leaders are asked to subscribe to the same guidelines and appropriateness on social media as they would when meeting with the student in person.

Confidentiality

There are limits to confidentiality when working with teenagers. Leaders must immediately report to staff if a minor discusses hurting themselves, hurting someone else or someone is hurting them.

Questions about such conversations or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the Teen Ministry Staff. This is not considered breaking confidence.

Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment (spanking, etc.) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain or humiliation are not appropriate in our ministry. This rule holds true for our ministry even if parents have given permission for corporal punishment.

Physical Contact

Appropriate physical contact between staff members and teenagers is generally acceptable in the church setting. However, physical contact should be minimal and only in the presence of other staff members. Appropriate touching should be limited to handshakes, "high fives", brief hugs or a brief touch on the shoulder. A teenager's preference not to be touched should always be respected.

Clothing Attire

All leaders are expected to dress in appropriate attire around students. Students attire must be appropriate for all gatherings as well. Students and adults are encouraged not to wear spaghetti straps, shirts with necklines that are too low, short shirts, short shorts, or any logos promoting alcohol, drug or sexual references.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the teen ministry staff.