

Teaming With Parents

Basic Policy for Youth Workers with Parents - Fall 2017

For Parents

Our Mission: To help students take their next step to KNOW Christ, GROW Together with God's people, and SHOW Christ's love the world around them.

- All our efforts as a ministry to students (events, camps, programs, mentoring relationships, small groups, etc) are centered in this one mission.

Relationships are Key: A big part of taking steps forward in knowing Christ, growing together, and showing Christ love involves taking steps toward healthy relationships with people. Students have many key and influential relationships (friends, family, teachers/coaches, and youthworkers). Among the most important relationship in a student's life is his/her relationship with the parents God has put in their lives.

Always Thinking Parents: We always want to help students pursue the best possible relationship with their parents. This includes open, honest, and respectful communication between them. Youth workers are often invited to help students process life. Helping a student process life always includes the youth worker encouraging a student to seek the help, support, and guidance of their parents.

- **The only exception** would be an accusation by a student of abuse involving his/her own parent. Our goal in this exception is still to work under the direction of legal authorities to seek the ultimate healing and restoration of that relationship.

Students Communicate Directly: It is always relationally best and helpful for the maturing process for a student to directly communicate with their parent regarding their lives. Our role as youth workers is to encourage them to follow through with that responsibility the best we can.

- While it is always best, it is not always possible to wait for a student to be ready to tell their parents about an important issue.
- Though it might endanger our relationship with a student and our ability to serve and encourage him/her, we will advise a parent of certain concerns if the student refuses to do so on their own.
- Some principles that will bring our leadership team to advise parents regardless of a student's willingness to share on their own are as follows:
 - The seriousness and depth of the issue in the student's life
 - Level of danger or risk to the student or others
 - Legal requirements (physical or sexual abuse)
 - The age and maturity of the student
 - Family dynamics and health
- Youth Staff take the approach of "the more serious the issue, the more leadership brought into the decision" (house leadership, Youth Staff coaches, Youth Pastor, Additional pastoral staff) and the more wisdom should be sought in determining the best path for the student.

For Youth Workers (Section of Youth Staff Covenant)

Team with parents - We are children of God and part of his family. We want to come alongside and work with parents as they take responsibility to lead their children toward Jesus.

We will...

- Make a regular effort to talk with parents as we contact students
- Do our best to communicate to the parents of my students about any unique events and activities before they take place or before they go with us. (This includes when my small group decides to leave the meeting location on Sunday Night to go somewhere unique)
- Work at listening to parents as they talk about their children and regularly inviting parents to talk with us about their children.
- Respecting the privacy of students and not sharing with parents everything they tell you, but making a commitment to quickly make sure parents know anything they need to know about their children's life, behavior, etc.
 - As youth workers (Youth pastor and volunteers), we are not professional counselors but instead offer pastoral counseling: providing listening grace filled ear, truth of the gospel as it applies to all parts of life, as well as biblical advice, encouragement, and prayer.
 - Things we must report (to parents and/or CPS/police), with the help of the youth pastor, house leader, or youth staff coach:
 - Physical or sexual abuse, suicidal thoughts, repeated drug or alcohol use, sexting
 - Many gray areas exist in the relationship of students' disclosure and parental involvement. As a ministry, we seek to approach these on a case by case basis, seeking God's wisdom and considering all the factors we are aware of (parent relationship/dynamic, student's age, student's faith and frame of mind, etc.). A youth leader should seek the advice of a youth staff coach, house leader or the youth pastor for direction, wisdom, and advice with any gray areas. Our hope is that parents can and eventually will be included in the healing process as a student is ready.
 - Some of the gray areas include but are not limited to: pornography, sexual identity struggles, self-harm, depression, misdemeanor illegal behavior
 - Including parents/reporting situations involves the following steps:
 1. Seeking advice/support from youth staff coach, house leader, or the youth pastor
 2. Telling the student first of the need for parents to know (student tells, leader helps student tell, or leader tells)
 - If student agrees to tell - Give a time period and then follow up with a call to the parent
 - If the student refuses to tell or resists the leader telling - leader should do his/her best to help the student understand this is because we care and we need to do this, then leader informs youth pastor, youth staff coach, or house leader who will help the youth staff member inform parents directly.
 3. Leader should give the youth pastor a brief written summary of the situation and parent response within a week from the discussion.