

# Youth Ministry Supervision Policies

Santa Clara Church of Christ -- 2600 Belmont St. -- Eugene, OR -- 97404

541-689-2127 – [www.santaclarachurch.com](http://www.santaclarachurch.com)

## OUR PROTECTION PHILOSOPHY

These policies and procedures are in place to protect children and youth, Staff and Leaders, and our church. It is important that everyone understands how to assess and address risks related to our ministries, in addition to following the policies and procedures set by our church leaders.

We focus on three main areas of risk as we strive for safety in all aspects of our ministry. Reducing the risk of incidents and injuries should be one of our top priorities.

- **Isolation**

*Risk increases as isolation increases.* A large majority of incidents and injuries occur in an isolated setting. Four factors affect isolation: (1) *the number of people present*, (2) *the time of the activity*, (3) *the location of the activity*, and (4) *the physical arrangements*. We need to think through each of these four factors when planning for ministry activities and events.

- **Accountability**

*Risk increases and accountability decreases.* Proper accountability is essential in our ministry in that it reduces the opportunities for sexual abuse, false accusations, and other harmful situations. Three factors affect the accountability of supervisors in ministry programs involving youth: (1) *the personal character and integrity of the adult worker*, (2) *the number of youth and staff/leaders present for the activity*, and (3) *the degree of openness and approval associated with the activity*.

- **Power**

*Risk increases when there is an imbalance of power, authority, influence, and control between a potential abuser and a potential victim.* An imbalance of power can happen between adults and children/youth, as well as between children/youth to other children/youth. Once an incident or injury occurs, the power that the abuser has can be used to enforce silence from the victim.

**Our goal should always be to create a ministry setting where isolation is eliminated, accountability exists, and power is balanced.**

**Communication is essential to ensure a safe and successful ministry.**

If at anytime you do not feeling comfortable communicating with another leader, talk with the Youth Minister. If at anytime you do not feel comfortable communicating with the Youth Minister, please talk with one of the Elders.

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## OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- **Youth Interaction**

No Staff/Leader/Helper is allowed to date a Youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a Youth. Any adult with prior convictions of child abuse or sexual misconduct may not be a Staff/Leader/Helper or serve in any capacity in the Youth Ministry. There are no exceptions to this guideline.

- **Two-adult rule.**

Make every effort to have two Staff members or Leaders present when interacting with one or more youth. Having non-related Staff/Leaders is preferable when it is an isolated ministry context.

- **Youth Ratio**

It is required that a safe ratio of Youth to Staff and Leaders is maintained. This does not replace the two adult rule. For most ministry activities, a ratio of 8:1 is appropriate, however, special trips or circumstances may necessitate more Staff/Leaders to maintain a safe environment.

- **One-on-one**

All one-on-one interaction should be in a public setting where other Staff and Leaders are in sight whenever possible. One-on-one meetings that happen outside of weekly ministry activities and/or are off of church property must receive prior approval from the Youth Minister and be documented within 24 hours. Meet during the day and always have parental approval.

- **Identification**

All Staff and Leaders must wear ministry provided identification when possible.

- **Staff Approval**

All ministry related activities must be approved by the Youth Minister and be listed on church calendars if appropriate. Approval from the Youth Minister should be done as early as possible. Openness is important for accountability to occur. The Youth Minister should be fully aware of all activities in advance, and approve the content, activities, and leadership of each program.

- **Permission Forms**

Permission and medical forms are required for all activities and events that are off of church property, overnight, or for special activities. Detailed information about the activity/event must also be provided to the parent/guardian. Hand written notes and verbal authorization from

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parents/guardians will not be allowed. Permission and medical forms must be taken on the trip or event by Staff/Leaders.

- **Building Guardian**

Whenever possible, there needs to be an extra Leader whose job is to monitor the safe use of the building. They are to ensure that people are where they need to be, and to monitor incoming and outgoing traffic.

- **Offsite and Overnight Trips/Events**

All ministry supervision policies apply to offsite and overnight trips. These activities present a higher risk due to increased isolation and decreased accountability, so we must be extra careful in our supervision of youth. For all overnight trips, sleeping arrangements must follow our two adult rule. No Leader should share a hotel room, dorm room, tent, or other private sleeping area with one or more youth. In most instances a group sleeping arrangement is usually the best choice. An example of this would be all Youth and Leaders sleeping in a church gymnasium, with a defined side for each gender. Members of the opposite gender must not enter into the other gender's sleeping area. Appropriate dress and sleeping clothing are always required for both Youth and staff/Leaders, and changing of clothes should be done privately.

- **Transporting youth**

Leaders must complete an *Authorized Driver's Form* and receive prior approval to transport Youth for ministry related events. This includes having the Leader's insurance information on file at the church office and watching a church provided safety video. Have two Leaders when transporting one or more Youth whenever possible. NEVER transport a Youth of the opposite gender alone. All one-on-one transportation must be documented.

All "authorized drivers" must report any moving violations, traffic accidents, convictions of felonies or crimes, intoxication related driving issues, or any illegal drug use to the Youth Minister or Elders in writing within 48 hours.

- **Youth and adults as ministry helpers**

Certain Youth will be helping within our ministry, and within other aspects of the church. Regardless of their ability to help, no one under the age of 18 is considered a Leader, and should never be left alone with other Children and Youth.

Non-Leader adults, including parents, will be present for different ministry situations, but they are not to be considered Leaders, and should not be left alone with any Youth.

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- **Deviation from policy**

If the policy is deviated from for any reason, the Youth Minister or Elders must be contacted immediately, and it should be documented.

- **Discipline**

The main ministry rule is RESPECT. Youth are to respect: God, leaders, one another, the activity/event, and all related property.

When a Youth is disrespectful, follow the “Three Strike Rule”:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Strike Verbal warning about the issue of disrespect
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Strike Discussion with Youth about the issue of disrespect, outside of the event/activity if possible.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike Removal of Youth from the activity, trip, class or event. Parent/guardian will be notified to pickup their Youth, and the Youth’s behavior will be discussed with the parents/guardians. Time away from the activity/event may be necessary.

Only Staff and Leaders should discipline Youth. Leaders/Helpers who are parents or family members of Youth within the ministry should not discipline those related to them. Never use any type of physical punishment or restraint with a Youth. Use two Leaders when disciplining a Youth when possible

## OTHER INFORMATION

- **Ministry documentation**

All ministry documentation should happen within 24 hours. Each Leader will have their own online document that will be specific to them for reporting time spent with Youth. Injuries and incidents should be reported using the respective forms. Forms are available online, or at the church office.

- **Policy Approval and Oversight**

The Elders are responsible for finalizing the policy and all policy changes. When policy changes are made, notification will be given to all Staff/Leaders/Helpers, and their *Policy Acknowledgement Form* on file at the church must be updated, or a new form must be signed.

- **Enforcement and Violations**

All those who supervise other ministry Staff and Leaders are charged with the diligent enforcement of this policy. These persons are required to review and revise this policy on an annual basis. Violations of this policy are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or

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re-assignment from working with Youth. Policy violations will be brought before the Elders and will be documented and filed.

- **Storage of documents and confidential information**

All ministry related documents and confidential information will be kept on file at the church office in a secure location or securely stored online.

- **Administration of Medicine and Medical Treatment**

At no time is a Staff/Leader allowed to administer medication(s), including simple over-the-counter medicine, unless written permission has been obtained through a signed and approved, event-specific *Medication Form* that states what types of medications may be administered, and what medications a Youth may possess. No one is ever allowed to assist a Youth in taking medication(s). Youth are not allowed to possess any medications not listed as approved on their *Medication Form*. Any and all medication(s) found will be confiscated unless listed on the *Medication Form* as approved for the Youth to carry. Only medications that are necessary to be carried by Youth will be approved as such.

Simple medical treatment, “first-aid”, is only allowed to be administered by those Staff/Leaders who are certified in first-aid. CPR is to be administered only by those who hold valid CPR certification appropriate to the age of the Child/Youth. Caution and proper protection should always be used when bodily fluids are involved. See the section on reporting incidents and injuries for the required reporting procedure.

- **Computer Policy**

Any computer that a Youth has privilege/access to use must be equipped with an appropriate content filter. Youth should be logged in through a non-administrator account by a Staff/Leaders. Passwords for computers and/or church software should not be given to Youth. Special permission may be granted to a Youth, but this must receive approval from Staff/Elders and be documented.

- **Special Needs**

We want every Child/Youth to have the same opportunities. Our church exists to minister to everyone, and as such we will not discriminate against any Child/Youth with special needs. We will do our best at being prepared to handle all situations, but there will be instances that arise in which creativity will be necessary to minister to and allow Children/Youth with special needs to participate.

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- **Applicant Denial**

Staff and the Elders reserve the right to deny applying Leaders or to remove a current Leader for any reason. Examples of possible reasons for denial are:

- Failure to meet/complete all requirements in the application process
- Previous convictions of child abuse or sexual misconduct
- Information received from the application process
- Failure to comply with the Protection Plan or ministry specific Supervision Policies

## REPORTING AND RESPONDING

### Responding

It is important to respond to all situations in which abuse, inappropriate interactions, or deviation from the Protection Plan and/or the Youth Supervision Policies has occurred. Communication in this regard is vital to insure the safety of our Youth, our Staff and Leaders, and our church.

### Reporting

In all cases where a Staff/Leader has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be abused or neglected, or will attempt to cause harm to another person or themselves, the Staff/Leader is obligated by Oregon law to report such incidents. Follow these steps for reporting suspected abuse.

1. Always dial 911 if someone is currently in danger.
2. Inform the Youth Minister or Elders immediately by phone or in person, and follow up with an *Incident Report Form* within 24 hours.
3. The Youth Minister will notify the Elders and will follow the legal guidelines for filing a report to a local law enforcement agency and/or Oregon DHS.
4. If the Staff/Leader is in doubt regarding whether a report should be made, they should telephone the DHS to discuss the situation to determine whether a report should be made. The person should then document the name, title, and recommendation of the DHS employee and submit the documentation to the Youth Minister or Elders.

**For more information on child abuse and child abuse reporting, visit the Oregon Department for Human Services:** <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/abuse/main.shtml>

**What is Child Abuse and Neglect:** [http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/abuse/abuse\\_neglect.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/abuse/abuse_neglect.shtml)

**Questions and Answer about Reporting Abuse and Neglect:** <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/abuse/cps/report.shtml>

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## APPLICABILITY, DEFINITION OF POLICY TERMS, MINIMUM AGE

This policy shall be applicable to all Youth (6<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) and includes all persons under 18 years of age.

Elder shall be defined as a leader of the church who has received the position according to the bylaws of Santa Clara Church of Christ. All Elders must complete and sign an acknowledgement of the church's Protection Plan and the Children and Youth Supervision Policies.

A Staff member is an adult (18+) who is employed by Santa Clara Church of Christ or given the title by the Elders.

A Leader is an adult who spends time in church sponsored Children and Youth activities, who has completed the Application Process and is approved as a ministry Leader.

A Helper is a person who may only assist another Staff or Leaders, and is either under the age of 18 or has not fully completed the Application Process or been approved. *Helpers must not be left alone with Children and/or Youth at any time.* All Helpers must sign a *Policy Acknowledgement Form*, and agree that they are held to the same policy standards as Staff and Leaders. If the helper is under the age of 18, a parent/guardian must also sign their *Policy Acknowledgement Form*.

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## Policy Acknowledgment Form

Name of Elder/Staff/Leader \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Initials

I have read and understand the Youth Ministry Supervision Policies<sup>1</sup> in addition to the Santa Clara Church of Christ Protection Plan. I commit to following the policies and procedures listed. I understand that my ability to serve is dependent on my adherence to these policies and procedures, but that I must also strive to protect youth, myself, other staff and volunteers, and the church in all possible ways.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Version Number: \_\_\_\_\_

1 The current Protection Plan and Youth Supervision Policies can be found here: <http://www.sc3thrive.com/who-we-are/safety/>