



The Heights Baptist Church Student Safety Policies

Dear Student Ministry Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to The Heights Baptist Church!

At The Heights Baptist Church, we take our responsibility to care for students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for staff members and volunteers serving in Student Ministry to junior high and high school students. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students, protecting students, you, and the mission of The Heights Baptist Church.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Next Generation Ministry Team

The Heights Baptist Church

Safety Policies & Procedures for Student Ministry (Junior and Senior High Students)

Contents:

- Overview of Safety System 4
- Student Safety Policy 5
- Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse 6
- Safety Committee 6
- Student Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan 7
- Building Safety 7
- Staff to Student Ratio 8
- Discipline 8
- Intoxicants 8
- Nudity 8
- One-to-One Interactions with Students 8
- Transportation 9
- Parental Contact 9
- Parental Involvement 9
- Physical Contact 9
- Sexually Oriented Conversations 10
- Sexually Oriented Materials 10
- Sleeping Arrangements 10
- Tobacco 11
- Verbal Interactions 11
- Policy Amendments 12
- Policy Acknowledgment and Agreement 14

Overview of The Heights Baptist Church Safety System

Because we care for students and desire to protect them, The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The Heights Baptist Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of The Heights Baptist Church Leadership. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a student for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip The Heights Baptist Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers, we be required to complete The Heights Baptist Church Screening Process, which may include:

- An Employment Application (employees only)
- A Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
- A face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- References to be checked (employees and volunteers)

*A volunteer must attend The Heights Baptist Church for three months before being eligible to serve in positions interacting with children or students.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members 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.

Sexual Abuse and Awareness Training will be required of all volunteers in the Children’s Ministry Department 16 years of age and older.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

The Heights Baptist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children’s or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Student Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

The Heights Baptist Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at The Heights Baptist Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to his or her immediate supervisor, the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

The Heights Baptist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Next Generation Pastor.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students

at The Heights Baptist Church. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from The Heights Baptist Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at The Heights Baptist Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

In the State of Virginia child abuse or neglect needs to be report immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred.

Child abuse or neglect witness by an individual while on the campus of The Heights Baptist Church or sponsored event is to be reported to a Staff Member of The Heights Baptist Church. At which time both the church Staff Member and witness will report the incident to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Virginia Department of Social Services tollfree hotline number is:

In Virginia (800) 552-7096

Out-of-state: (804) 786-8536

Hearing-impaired: (800) 828-1120

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The Heights Baptist Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children and students, The Heights Baptist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet a minimum of two times each year.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable The Heights Baptist Church Children's and Student Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Next Generation Pastor
2. Pre-School Minister/Director
3. Children's Minister/Director
4. Student Minister/Director
5. Adult Ministry representative appointed by the Senior Pastor

MEETINGS

The Next Generation Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the request of any Safety Committee member.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing The Heights Baptist Church policies and procedures to related ministries of the church safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to The Heights Baptist Church Executive Staff.

Student Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will happen on a regular basis in our Youth Ministry programs. A supervisor will be appointed by the Student Pastor for the purpose of observing staff members and volunteer interactions with students.

1. **Supervisor** will conduct unannounced observation at least once each week in programs that occur weekly.
2. **The Student Minister** will train staff and volunteers yearly in their area of ministry with the most current information the church has on risk management training and adherence to proper risk management procedures.
3. **The Student Minister** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs that occur weekly.
4. **Safety Committee Member** will conduct an unscheduled observation of the Student Ministry program up to four times a year in order to affirm that our Student Ministry Safety Policies are being followed correctly.
5. **Next Generation Pastor** meets with Student Minister regularly to discuss Student Ministry, including safety training and procedures.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Student Minister will be responsible for ensuring that the Student Ministry area is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include monitoring of staff members, volunteers and students in student classrooms or meetings.

No student will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during Student Ministry programs or meetings. Student Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone

with an individual student in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single student, that staff member or volunteer will take the student to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a student desires additional conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are in view of the conversation)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Any two students together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Student Ministry activities and programs:

For groups up to and including 10 students, there will be at least 1 staff member or volunteer supervising. For groups ranging from 11 to 29 students, there will be at least 2 staff members or volunteers supervising. For groups larger than 30 students, there will be at least 3 staff members or volunteers supervising.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify supervisory staff responsible for the program or event. The responsible supervisory staff member will make diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

DISCIPLINE

It is the policy of The Heights Baptist Church that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or students. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction or inappropriate behaviors by students. If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff members will verbally redirect students involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Student Minister.

INTOXICANTS

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising students.

NUDITY

Staff and volunteers in The Heights Baptist Church student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students 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.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will communicate a plan to the Student Minister concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

The Heights Baptist Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from the Student Minister.

If a closed-door meeting must occur, the student staff member must inform another staff member BEFORE the meeting occurs, and the door remains unlocked.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for students. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of students:

1. Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving The Heights Baptist Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by The Heights Baptist Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents whose student is participating in The Heights Baptist Church Student Ministry activities and programs will be contacted if their child becomes severely ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Student Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Student Ministry programs will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, The Heights Baptist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Student Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone involved in our Student Ministry programs:

1. Brief Hugs, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between students, staff, and or volunteers are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor or Student Minister.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of an individual, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a student, staff, and or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or student staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of students, staff, and or volunteers in the Student Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant student, staff, and or volunteer. A person's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Student staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor or Student Minister

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time Student ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will occur in group settings, and will convey the church's views on these topics.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to any student) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of students, including those in electronic form.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The 2-adult rule must be followed; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer.
2. All adult leaders must have previously completed the Church's screening and training process.
3. As long as any students are awake, one trip leader must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
4. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
5. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
6. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
7. Staff members and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
8. Whenever possible, at least one staff member or volunteer will sleep in the same room (but not same bed) as students, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
10. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

TOBACCO

The Heights Baptist Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in Church facilities, while in the presence of students or their parents, and during Church activities or programs. The Heights Baptist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. The Heights Baptist 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 students.

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

Policy Amendments

BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS

Background checks will be required of any short term or long-term team members under the umbrella of the Next Generation Ministry (Pre-School, Children, and Youth Team Members). Team Members include any volunteers (i.e. unpaid) and paid staff.

*Background checks on Team Members under the age of 18 is prohibited

SEXUAL ABUSE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Ministry Safe sexual abuse video training level 1 will be required of every paid staff member of The Heights Baptists Church. The below list of non-paid Team Members will also be required to complete training:

- Preschool, Children and Youth Leaders and Coaches serving weekly or bi-weekly
- Security and Medical Team Members
- Mission Trip Team Member who are on a mission team with minors
- KIDnect Coordinator
- MOPS Kids Coordinator
- Any Team Member over the age of 16 who will be participating in an overnight camp or retreat with minors.

*Team Members under the age of 16 will not be required to take the Sexual Abuse Training

CHILD CARE EVENT POLICY

- Events needing childcare should be submitted 6 weeks in advance.
- Additional events scheduled outside of the annual calendar meeting may not be budgeted for. If this is the case, the requesting ministry may be asked to cover the cost of childcare from their ministry budget.
- A list of registered children including their grade and age should be submitted to the Preschool Ministry Director 7 days before the event. Late registrants will be considered and approved by the Preschool Ministry Director.
- An event with less than 5 children registered may not be accepted. That decision will be made at the close of registration by the Preschool Ministry Director and the requesting Ministry.
- If food is being served; a list of ALL foods being served at the event should be submitted to the Preschool Director 7 days before the event.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of The Heights Baptist Church's Student Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at The Heights Baptist Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by The Heights Baptist Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between The Heights Baptist Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of The Heights Baptist Church's Student Ministry policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to remain attached to The Heights Baptist Church Student Ministry Safety Policies]