



# The Heights Baptist Church Student Safety and Behavioral Policies

Dear Student Ministry Team 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 where students can grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

This handbook provides a general overview of procedures and guidelines for staff and team members in our Student Ministry. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students and to protect them and our team members at The Heights Baptist Church.

After carefully reading this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form on the last page.

Sincerely,

Next Generation Ministry Team

**The Heights Baptist Church**  
**Safety & Behavior Policy and Procedures for Student Ministries**

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## 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 team member working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or team member placement begins.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

The Heights Baptist Church policies and procedures require staff members and team member to avoid abusive behavior. Staff and team member must report any policy violations to The Heights Baptist Church Pastoral Staff. Staff and team member 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 and team members with the information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, the Church requires all staff and team members to complete sexual abuse awareness training, which is renewed every three years.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff and team members will be required to complete The Heights Baptist Church Screening Process, which may include the following:

- 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 team member must attend The Heights Baptist Church for three months and agree to or have already taken The Starting Point Class before being eligible to serve in a position in our Student Ministry.

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff and team members are required to review the policies in this manual and sign the last page indicating that they have read and understood the material and agree to comply with policy requirements.

Sexual Abuse and Awareness Training will be required of all team member in the Student Ministry Department 16 years of age and older.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff and team members working or volunteering in student activities or programming to undergo a criminal background check. Depending on the position, background checks may require differing levels or intensities.

### **Student Safety Policy**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

The Heights Baptist Church has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and activities. Every staff and team members are responsible for acting in the best interest of all individuals in every program.

If a staff or team member observes inappropriate behaviors (e.g., 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 the Student Minister.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

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

Sexual abusers often engage in "grooming" behaviors to manipulate children for abuse. Staff and team members should remain observant and report any behavior that could be interpreted as grooming, any policy violations, or any other suspicious actions immediately to the Student Minister or other Pastoral Staff.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Staff and team members at The Heights Baptist Church who oversee others are responsible for ensuring strict adherence to all church policies. Any violations of these policies may result in immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Student Ministry roles. The Next Generation Pastor will have the final authority in decisions regarding policy violations.

### **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

All questions or concerns regarding inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be promptly directed to the Student Minister or other Pastoral Staff.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any individual accused of committing a prohibited act or any behavior deemed harmful to a child by the church will be immediately suspended from participating in the Student Ministry or other leadership positions. This suspension will remain in effect throughout any investigations conducted by law enforcement or Child Protective Services.

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. Team Members who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participating in future activities involving children or students at The Heights Baptist Church.

## **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

In the State of Virginia, suspected child abuse or neglect needs to be reported 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 witnessed 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 this time, both the church staff member and the witness will report the incident to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Virginia Department of Social Services toll-free 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 students, The Heights Baptist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet at least two times each year.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable The Heights Baptist Church 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 Safety Committee meeting to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the request of any 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**

Our student Ministry programs will regularly monitor staff and team members. The student Pastor will appoint a supervisor to observe staff and team members' interactions with students.

1. **The 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 monthly for weekly programs.
4. **A Safety Committee Member** will conduct an unscheduled observation of the Student Ministry program up to four times a year to affirm that our Student Ministry Safety Policies are being followed correctly.
5. **The Next Generation Pastor** meets regularly with the Student Minister to discuss Student Ministry, including safety training and procedures.

### **BUILDING SAFETY**

The Student Minister will monitor the student ministry area during Sunday classes or programming. This will include monitoring staff members, team members, and students in student classrooms or meetings.

Students will always be supervised during Student Ministry programs or meetings while being present in the designated meeting area. Student Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual student in any room or building. If a staff member or volunteer finds themselves alone with a single student, they will take the student to a room or building occupied by others or to a location readily 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 and team members must ensure that every room and restroom is checked before 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:

At least one staff or team members will supervise groups, including ten students. At least two staff members or volunteers will supervise groups ranging from 11 to 29 students. At least three staff members or volunteers will supervise groups larger than 30 students.

If a worker is not within the required ratio, it is their responsibility to promptly inform the supervisory staff in charge of the program or event. The supervisory staff member will then make a concerted effort to promptly adjust the staff-to-student ratios to comply with this policy.

## **DISCIPLINE**

It is the policy of The Heights Baptist Church that staff and team members 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, correction, or inappropriate behaviors by students. If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff or team members, 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 a fight or physical altercation, staff members will verbally redirect students involved and 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 the church facility, participating in church-sponsored events, or traveling with students to and from church events.

## **NUDITY**

Staff and team members 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 students' emotional needs may occasionally require staff or team members to minister to them individually. Staff and team members should follow the following guidelines when interacting with students.

### **Individual Meetings**

Staff and team members should conduct one-to-one meetings with individual students 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 is necessary, a second team members must be present, and the door must remain unlocked throughout the meeting.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Staff and team members 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 in a non-public place should be avoided. Staff and team members should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport.
2. Staff and team members should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
3. The driver may use No cell phones 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 are invited to observe all programs and activities involving their students. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Student Ministry programs must complete the Church's team member 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 working in Student Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and students are essential for student 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 benefit the student and never be based on the emotional needs of a team members.

4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or in the presence of other students, staff members, and/or student ministry team member. 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 staff or volunteers in the Student Ministry must always foster trust. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff and team members are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touching by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate the Student Minister or Pastoral Staff Member.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff and team members 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 convey the church's views.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff and team members 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 overnight sleeping arrangements to be made for students, staff members, and team members (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 completed the Church's screening and training process.
3. As long as students are awake, one trip leader must monitor 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. If a sleepover on campus involves both boys and girls, they must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
7. Staff and team members will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that students remain in designated sleeping places. Staff and team members should never physically touch a student during bed checks.
8. Whenever possible, at least one staff or team members will sleep in the same room (but not the same bed) as students or in an adjoining room with open doors between the rooms.
9. If overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, team member, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

### **NICOTINE PRODUCTS**

The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members, team members, and teenagers to refrain from using or possessing tobacco, vaping devices, and other nicotine products on the church campus and during any church-hosted activities or programs. The church is a tobacco—and nicotine-free facility.

### **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members, team members, and students should be positive and uplifting. The Heights Baptist Church staff members and team members should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in students' spiritual growth and development.

To this end, staff and team members 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 team members are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of students.

### **Behavior Policy**

The Heights Next Generation Ministry exists to help students live out a God-sized life and love. We are successful when we create an environment where students can learn the Bible and actively live out its teachings. To ensure this, we have some general **expected** behaviors that must be maintained so that students can fully enjoy their time at church while focusing on growing in their faith and living out their walk with Jesus.

### **EXPECTATIONS:**

- Every student is expected to respect all adults (staff, team members, and others)
- Every student is expected to respect others regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, and social status.
- Students are expected not to be disruptive during times of teaching including large group experiences, small groups, and worship. Disruptive behaviors can include but are not limited to:
  - Talking when the leader is talking.

- Texting and misusing phones. Examples would include being on social media or texting when the class or group is reading the Bible together.
  - General touching and horseplay with those around them.
  - Intentional behavior to disrupt other students or leaders. This would include continuing an addressed behavior even if the student's intent is not to be disruptive.
- Students must not wander around the church during programming time.
  - Students are expected to stay the full length of programming unless a family situation requires them to leave early.
  - Students are expected to respect ALL the church's property, including furniture, outside equipment, decorations, and any other property that belongs to the church or members of the church.
  - Alcohol, drugs, vapes, weapons, fireworks, or any other object deemed inappropriate and dangerous by church staff are never allowed at youth events.
  - Clothing should not contain offensive language, pictures, or inappropriate context.

### **SAFEGUARDING EXPECTATIONS:**

To safeguard an environment where students can learn about Jesus, grow in their faith, and build God-honoring relationships, we have established clear boundaries and expectations for both students and parents to follow. If a student fails to meet these guidelines, the following steps will be taken in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17:

- **1st Offense:** The student will receive a verbal warning from either a staff or team member
- **2nd Offense:** A staff or team member will meet with the Student Pastor to discuss the situation with the student; the student will be cautioned to stop the disruptive or disrespectful behavior, or their parents will be contacted.
- **3rd Offense:** The Student Pastor will contact the student's parent/guardian to inform them of the ongoing behavioral issues and request their assistance in correcting the behavior in their home and the church
- **4th Offense:** If the behavior persists, the Student Pastor will meet with the student and their parents to establish a behavior contract. This contract will clearly define the unacceptable behavior and outline the consequences for failing to abide by the agreed-upon guidelines.

**\*\* Please Note:** Staff reserves the right to contact parents immediately in the event of disruptive behavior on campus. In severe cases, such as intentional rule violations or fighting, staff may ask the student or child to leave the program immediately.

### **RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:**

- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that students respect, understand, and support the church's behavior policies.
- Parents/guardians must acknowledge that church staff and leaders enforce these guidelines and policies to maintain a safe environment for everyone.
- Parents/guardians should teach their children to respect authority, follow rules, and meet expectations, including appropriate behavior during all services.
- It is important to emphasize to students the significance of being a positive role model and witness for Christ at church, in the community, and at home.
- Parents/guardians must acknowledge that their children's behavior at church is ultimately their responsibility as the primary faith trainers of their children.

**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 in it. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at The Heights Baptist Church.

Further, I understand that The Heights Baptist Church may modify the manual at any time and amend, revise, or eliminate any guidelines at any time.

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 do not express or imply a contractual employment relationship between The Heights Baptist Church and me. If I apply 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 created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I 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]