



Youth Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy

Before becoming a youth ministry volunteer:

1. Youth ministry volunteers must profess Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior and have been baptized.
2. Youth ministry volunteers must support the “Statement of Belief” of The Gathering International Church.
3. Youth ministry volunteers must be regular attenders and partners of The Gathering International Church.
4. Any person who is currently under investigation for or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse will not be permitted to volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving youth.
5. Youth ministry volunteers must submit a “Youth Ministry Volunteer Application” which includes two references: one from a leader from their primary church in their home country and one from the regional director of their sending mission organization or current employer if they are not with a sending organization. The “Youth Ministry Volunteer Application” and two references will be kept on file.
6. Youth ministry volunteers must read and sign that they agree to follow the “Youth Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy.” This document must be re-read and signed annually.

While serving as a youth ministry volunteer:

1. At no time will a youth ministry volunteer be allowed to be alone with a youth. The only exceptions to this policy are in situations in which parent/guardian consent has been obtained and the interaction occurs with a youth of the same gender as the volunteer in a public place (i.e. restaurant or coffee shop where people are in and out of the area) for the purpose of one-on-one counseling or discipleship.
2. If an unforeseen medical emergency occurs (such as needing to take a youth to the hospital), all attempts will be made to contact the parent/guardian beforehand, but if they are unreachable the youth’s medical needs will be a priority and youth ministry volunteers may take the youth to the hospital for medical attention.
3. Youth are not checked in/checked out of youth group by parents/guardians, but are free to arrive and leave (to use the restroom, join their parents in the service, leave youth group early, etc.) as they deem necessary. Youth ministry volunteers are allowed to inquire about youth leaving and deny them permission if they do not feel it’s appropriate for the youth to leave, especially for middle school youth, however the youth ministry volunteers are not required to inquire about youth leaving. If parents/guardians desire for their youth to be monitored more closely then it is their responsibility to approach the youth ministry volunteers and coordinate a check in/check out system.

4. During youth group, the youth ministry volunteers will occasionally look into each other's middle school and high school classrooms for the purpose of increasing accountability and decreasing isolation.
5. For overnight events, the males and females will sleep in separate areas supervised by at least four adults, two chaperones of each gender.
6. Pictures posted of youth on social media should not be tagged to identify a youth's name or family. In the event that a parent or guardian objects to a photo it will be removed as quickly as possible.
7. Youth ministry volunteers will immediately report any other volunteers they see violating the "Youth Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy" to the youth director (or the pastor if the violator is the youth director). The youth director will discuss the issue with the alleged violator of the policy and if a violation occurred, the volunteer may no longer be permitted to work with children or youth at The Gathering International Church.
8. Youth ministry volunteers will report suspicions of self-harm or physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect¹ of a youth (by a parent, teacher, youth ministry volunteer, etc.) to the youth director (or the pastor if the violator is the youth director) within 24 hours. The youth director will follow the church's "Process of Reporting" guidelines within 24 hours. If the alleged abuser is a youth ministry volunteer, then they will be banned from working with the youth until an investigation has occurred and they have been cleared of all charges.
9. All youth volunteers will re-read and sign the "Youth Volunteer Safety Policy" annually.

I have read, understand, and agree to The Gathering International Church's "Statement of Belief" and "Youth Ministry Volunteer Safety Policy." I understand that if I violate any point in this policy then I may immediately be dismissed from volunteering and may no longer be permitted to volunteer to work with children or youth at The Gathering International Church.

Signature

Date (Day/Month/Year)

¹Definitions of self-harm, abuse forms, and neglect are found on the "Definitions" page of the Youth Ministry Volunteers Safety Policy.
Last reviewed and updated 8/23/22

Definitions of Youth and Children's Ministries Volunteers Safety Policies

Child: A minor from infancy until age 12.

Youth: A minor currently in 6th-12th grade.

Youth Ministry Director: Gregory Vrugink (as of January 2018). The leader of the youth ministry and youth ministry volunteers.

Youth Ministry Volunteer: An adult volunteering to work in the youth ministry.

Children's Ministry Director: Bethany Gilliam (as of September 2019). The leader of the children's ministry and children's ministry volunteers.

Children's Ministry Volunteer: An adult or youth volunteering to work in the children's ministry.

Security Team: A children's ministry volunteer monitoring the halls outside the children's classrooms to assure the church's safety policies are being upheld.

Physical abuse: An action which results in actual or potential physical harm (examples: hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, shaking, burning, etc.).

Sexual abuse: The involvement of a youth in sexual activity with an adult or another child.

- a. **Verbal:** Remarks which include sexual threats, solicitation, obscene or sexually explicit language (whether in person, on the telephone, letters, text messages, or emails) with the intent to arouse or stimulate.
- b. **Visual:** Indecent exposure, showing or taking of suggestive pictures, pornographic material of genitals or chests, unclothed persons, any sexual activity, or stimulated sexual activating such as masturbation
- c. **Physical:** Physical contact or penetration by penis, fingers, or any other body part or object with a person's clothed or unclothed genital, pubic area, buttocks, or in the case of a female breasts or causing a child to perform any of these acts. Masturbation in from of or to the victim, rubbing, holding or kissing for the purpose of sexual gratification.

Emotional abuse: The persistent verbal rejection, humiliation, or denial of a person's worth which results in actual or potential emotional harm and/or adverse behavioral development. (examples: belittling, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, bullying, etc.)

Neglect: The failure to provide for a child's basic human needs (including food, shelter, love, security, medical attention, and education), in the context of resources reasonably available to the parents/caretakers, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health or development. Neglect includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Self-Harm: The act of purposefully harming oneself (examples: cutting, carving, anorexia, bulimia, hair pulling, picking, burning, vaping, smoking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, suicidal thoughts, etc.).