

# **Grand Valley Methodist Youth Ministries**

## **2019-2020 Safe Sanctuary Policy**

**Statement:** As a Christian community of faith and as United Methodist congregations, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events. We will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies (including first aid and ethos of discipline). We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law. We will be prepared to respond to the media should any incident occur.

**Reporting:** Sometimes students will share personal struggles and situations they are facing. At times, these thoughts trigger a reaction on our part as leaders. As both paid staff and volunteers in the Grand Valley Methodist Youth Ministries, we are legally required to report certain things. You are encouraged to remind students that anything they share under these categories must be shared confidentially with a pastoral staff (Jessica or a clergy member).

If you suspect any of the following, record it in the crisis notebook and report it to Jessica immediately:

1. Suicidal thoughts, active self-injury, active eating disorders, and anything else that causes harm to them.

Sometimes students will share in their testimony previous struggles with these issues. These items might need to be brought to the youth minister's attention, but you can use your discretion. Any struggle that is active or ongoing must be shared confidentially with the youth minister or a clergy member.

2. An abusive home environment (physical, sexual, verbal, or neglect).  
This includes past abuse. If a student shares this with you, remind them that out of love for them and their well-being, you must share it confidentially with pastoral staff.
3. Actions that can cause harm to others  
This includes thoughts, desires, or plans to carry out "hit-lists", physically fight other students, or bring harm to other adults/students/institutions.

Because our desire is to maintain an atmosphere of safety and protection for all children and adults involved in Grand Valley Methodist Youth Ministries, it is imperative that all involved adults understand and abide by the following guidelines. These guidelines serve to protect our children while also protecting our ministry by giving no room for accusations against or questioning of the moral integrity of the ministry and its volunteers.

1. The bottom line: Youth workers should avoid being alone with an adult member of the opposite gender or any student (regardless of gender) at any time or for any reason.
2. Adult to Child Ratios:
  - a. In-town church functions should have at least 2 adults present per 25 youth with 1 adult added for every 10 youth over 25. More adults are encouraged.
  - b. Out of town functions should have 1 adult per 7 youth with a minimum of 2 adults.
3. Youth Worker Requirements:
  - a. Adult youth workers should be five years older than the oldest youth – generally 23 years old. Younger adults may volunteer but cannot be counted toward the required adult to child ratio.
  - b. All youth workers should be offered training at least once per year.
4. Transportation Issues:
  - a. If a student needs a ride home, please take another person with you. Avoid being alone in the car with any student.
  - b. If you cannot avoid taking a student home, you must call someone on your cell phone and talk to them during your ride home to effectively put someone else in the car with you. Please avoid this situation as much as possible.
  - c. Any person transporting youth must supply the church with a copy of their driver's license and insurance.
5. Counseling Issues:
  - a. Encourage students desiring counsel to meet with a same-sex volunteer.
  - b. Take these precautions, especially in the case of an opposite gender student:
    - i. If possible, have another volunteer sit in on the discussion with you.
    - ii. Talk in a public space.
    - iii. If you need to meet with a student at a time outside of a regular group meeting, have him/her meet you at a public place (the mall, Taco Bell, coffee, etc.)
    - iv. If the issue can wait, postpone it until another volunteer is available.
6. Affection Issues:
  - a. Physical touch is good, so long as:
    - i. It's public.
    - ii. It's extended equally to members of all genders.

- iii. It's extended freely and not to select students.
- iv. It's the right kind of touch.
- b. Don't touch anyone in a way that could be construed as romantic or flirtatious by them or others.
- c. Specific types of touch that should be avoided at all times:
  - i. Holding hands when the entire group isn't holding hands.
  - ii. Inappropriate hugs (side-hugs are strongly suggested for opposite gender)
  - iii. Extended touch
  - iv. Lap-sitting
  - v. Any kind of touch that happens in a horizontal position (lying down to watch movies, etc.)
- d. Volunteers should also be aware that in most cases "perception is reality". If there are any hints of sexual thoughts or motives, the adult should avoid physical contact with that individual.

I agree to these principals and agree to abide by them and be held accountable for them as a volunteer in Grand Valley Methodist Youth Ministries.

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Printed Name

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Date

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Signature

**Grand Valley Methodist Youth Ministries is a ministry of Crossroads, First, Fruita, Palisade,  
and Redlands United Methodist Churches.**