



Safety Standards

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Safety Standards

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Leadership in Youth for Christ is an exciting and challenging opportunity to work with kids, share the life changing message of Jesus Christ, and see Him begin to transform their lives. With this opportunity comes a high calling to responsibility. Each of us in leadership has a God-given responsibility for the safety of every young person, volunteer and coworker entrusted to us. The following Safety Standards are offered to help you honor this responsibility.

Scriptural Foundation

1 Peter 5 tells us, *"be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers ... eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."* We understand that we have a responsibility not only to set a godly example to young people, but an even higher calling because they are entrusted to us as sheep to a shepherd.

The passage goes on to tell us how to honor this high calling: **"Be sober and vigilant, for our adversary the devil roams around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."** To be sober is to be alert, to keep your senses about you ready for action. To be vigilant is to keep careful watch over those entrusted to your care, to be prepared to defend them at all times. YFC's Risk Management Department exists to encourage you in this sobriety and aid you in your vigilance for the kids you serve and shepherd.

Philosophy of Risk Management

Because the responsibility for safety belongs to everyone in leadership, we must understand ourselves as people and as an organization to put programs and policies in place to help mitigate the risks inherent in our ministry. While we certainly want kids to have fun, we are not here as leaders to have fun - especially at the risk of a child's well-being. And while we want to be liked by kids and want to engage with them on their level, the time comes when we realize their cognitive development is not at an appropriate place to engage with them. In short, as a leader, you are the adult - and need to take responsibility even when unpopular.

Every adult volunteer and employee of YFC is a leader, and represents the standards and reputation of our ministry to the kids we serve, their families, and the community at large. This Safety Standards program is in place to protect kids, to protect ourselves and one another as adults, and to protect the ministry of Youth for Christ in practice and reputation.

YFC's Risk Management philosophy can be summarized in three broad tasks: **screening, training and supervision.** When we do these three things diligently and prayerfully, we manage our risk most effectively. This manual is organized into these three categories.

Please direct all questions or requests for further information to riskmanagement@yfc.net.

Part One

Screening & Selection

Screening and Selection

Goal: To have a high level of confidence in every adult we entrust with the responsibility of relationship with the kids in our ministry.

Policy Statement

The following screening procedures apply to any and all who fall into one of these categories:

- Applicants for any paid position in YFC
- Applicants for Board membership
- Applicants for Volunteer roles in which even incidental access to youth will occur.

Until this screening process is completed satisfactorily, the applicant cannot be approved for either employment or volunteer status, including Board membership. Failure to screen a volunteer or employee with a relevant criminal history who subsequently abuses a child is a preventable tragedy that may result in liability for any YFC entity that practiced such negligent hiring practices. Once completed, any paper files containing copies of all required paperwork should be permanently stored in a locked cabinet, preferably off-site. Any electronic documentation should be stored in a secure, password protected location.

The screening process will include the following steps:

- 1) Application
- 2) Interview
- 3) Reference Checks
- 4) Criminal Background Check
- 5) Evaluation & Final Decision

Each YFC entity should also familiarize itself with state laws in the states, jurisdictions or institutions in which it conducts business and comply with any and all additional screening

Screening Process Procedures

The first three steps on the preceding list of procedures must be completed for all YFC employees and volunteers (including Board members) without exception. The fourth - a Background Check - needs to be completed and approved **before**

- Any employee, regardless of role, is hired
- Any Board member is installed and
- Any volunteer is granted access to youth.

A prospective new volunteer or employee may come to observe on a one-time trial basis provided they are accompanied by a YFC employee.

1. Application

All potential employees will complete and sign the Application for Employment, and volunteers or interns will complete the Application for Volunteer & Internship Positions. Access to these applications can be found in the Risk Management Documents section of Impact. Applications must be received and reviewed before allowing the applicant to have contact with youth. Completed applications are to be securely stored indefinitely regardless of the final decision to employ or engage the applicant.

2. Interview

All potential employees and volunteers should be interviewed by the appropriate YFC Chapter employee or representative. For employment interviews, the new hire's direct supervisor should be included in the interview. The YFC interviewer should be prepared for the appropriate type of interview being conducted so as to not violate any standards for employment or engagement. YFC/USA's Human Resource Department is available to provide guidance on interviewing best practices and legal requirements. Any notes documenting the interview should be filed along with the completed application.

3. Reference Checks

All potential employees and volunteers who will be working with youth should provide the names of at least three references. The Chapter or ministry is responsible for directly contacting the references.

The preferred method of reference check is an in-person or telephone interview. An alternative option would be for the reference to complete and return a reference check form. Forms should be collected in a timely manner. Should a concern arise during the reference check process, then the supervising agent or YFC Director should address the issue directly with the applicant prior to allowing him or her to have access to youth or begin fulfilling YFC responsibilities.

All reference check information should be securely filed along with the application and other screening documentation.

4. Background Check

A background check must be completed for all paid employment positions, Chapter Board Members, and any volunteer who will be working directly with youth. YFC will provide a preferred vendor for doing the background screening, or Chapters may elect to use alternative services as long as the service meets the following minimum standards:

- Social Security number based identity verification and alias search
- Seven year address history
- County criminal record search for all addresses in seven year history
- National sex offender registry
- National criminal record search
- Motor vehicle record search (MVR)

YFC Preferred Vendor - YFC will identify a preferred vendor at a nationally negotiated rate for background screening services that will help provide YFC with the highest standard of reporting to ensure greater confidence in those we entrust to spend time with our kids.

Alternative Private Vendors - Chapters may choose to use an alternative independent vendor as long as the above stated minimums are met.

FBI Checks - The FBI's Criminal Justice Information Systems department collects fingerprints and arrest and conviction data from law enforcement agencies at every level nationwide. While containing perhaps the best information there is, the FBI database is intended for law enforcement use and searches require the submission of fingerprints. However, several pilot programs are currently being explored to give organizations like YFC access to records in the FBI database. More information can be found at: <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/cjis.htm>.

Any paper copies of the background screening reports should be kept along with the application and reference checks in a secured location, preferably offsite. Electronic copies should be stored in a secure, password protected location.

Renewing Background Checks

In some cases, a current employee or volunteer may commit crimes while already involved with YFC. For this reason, background checks are recommended to be renewed every three years for ongoing employees and volunteers, especially when they have been out of contact with their Chapter for any extended period of time. For occasional or seasonal volunteers, it is recommended that background checks be renewed annually.

When we can Accept Third Party Background Checks

YFC's collaborative community strategy often gives rise to employees or volunteers of partnering organizations being involved in our activities and programs. We can accept a background check run by a partner organization when it meets all of our standards, including:

- A Social Security Number Verification, Name and Background Check
- A National Criminal Background Check
- A National Sex Offender Check
- A County Level Check in any counties the subject has lived in for the past 10 years since turning 18
- A MVR Check

*Statewide checks (including State Police checks) are not sufficient.

5. Evaluation

Once all documentation has been collected and assembled, the Chapter leadership then evaluates the candidate and decides on whether to accept or decline the applicant for

service in Youth for Christ. Of particular importance in the evaluation process is exercising due diligence in the event that an applicant has a criminal history.

When an Applicant has a Criminal History

A criminal history does not necessarily immediately disqualify an applicant from being involved in Youth for Christ. Consideration should be given to the nature and seriousness of the offense, the type of role the applicant is being considered for, time elapsed since the last conviction and whether the applicant completely disclosed their criminal record prior to application.

We are responsible to determine which applicants are the best qualified for participation in YFC. We do not determine whether an applicant is fit or unfit for ministry altogether. It is our ethical and legal responsibility to be discriminant and use sound judgment in our screening process, and this is an entirely separate issue from judging the applicant's salvation or the legitimacy of his or her testimony. Nor does disqualifying someone from participation in YFC disqualify them from the grace of God or His restoration work in his or her life. Keep in mind that while YFC is part of God's work of grace and restoration in people's lives, our specific calling is to the lives of kids as the specific recipients of our ministry. Adults in the process of restoration may desire to be part of our organization, and as ministers we may feel a desire to minister to them; however we must keep the distinction that adults are practitioners of ministry in YFC, not recipients, and should find another ministry to help meet their spiritual needs.

Disqualifying Offenses

Some criminal convictions, regardless of when the crimes were committed or if the applicant was a minor at the time of the crime, are serious enough that they automatically disqualify someone from involvement with YFC. These convictions fall into three categories: violent crimes, sexual crimes and crimes against children. Examples would include but not be limited to homicide, aggravated assault, rape, statutory rape, molestation, child abuse, possession of child pornography, kidnapping, domestic violence or any other crime or credible suspicion which is determined to pose an unacceptable risk.

Non-Disqualifying Offenses

Some offenses may show up on a background check which do not automatically disqualify an applicant. These offenses may be unrelated to the applicant's qualification as a potential employee or volunteer. Or, they may point to areas of concern that might suggest a more cautious approach with this person. Careful evaluation should be done by the local staff and Executive Director to determine whether the applicant should be denied, should receive limited access to youth (with clear, specific and written recommendations about those limitations) or should be granted full access. Each situation should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with careful attention paid to any factor that could give insight into the character and trustworthiness of the applicant.

Each Executive Director and/or YFC staff person responsible to screen potential employees and volunteer applicants may reject any applicant on any number of grounds not detailed above (e.g. a history of questionable behavior around youth, credible accusations of misconduct with youth, etc.). If questions arise during the process of screening, the YFC/USA HR department and National Field Directors are available for assistance on these decisions. Executive Directors are encouraged to take advantage of these resources as needed.

Exceptions Policy and Appeals Process

In the event an applicant has a criminal history, or is credibly suspected of inappropriate past behavior, an Executive Director may trigger the following process to aid in making an informed final decision about whether to accept an applicant or not. This process is designed for two scenarios: first, when it is not clear whether past offenses are serious enough to warrant disqualification and further clarity is needed. Second, Executive Directors or National Field Directors can initiate this process by way of an appeal if an applicant is initially denied but they feel special consideration is warranted due to exceptional circumstances.

No exception will be considered or granted for any applicant convicted of sexual crimes.

Team of Three

Consideration and deliberation will be conducted by a team of three people, and shall consist of the Executive Director, the National Field Director and the Director of Risk Management. In the event an appeal is initiated by an NFD or one of the above members is unavailable, the third member may be a member of the YFC Cabinet. Decisions to accept an applicant with or without restrictions must be reached unanimously by this group, and a single "no vote" will result in disqualification of the applicant.

Considerations

In their deliberation, the team of three should give careful attention to a wide variety of considerations. A guide document outlining these considerations can be obtained by contacting a National Field Director.

Conclusion

After careful deliberation, the team of three may recommend one of three options: full access, limited access, or denied access. The decision of the committee should be considered final.

Option A: Full access

If the prospective applicant's non-disqualifying criminal history does not pose an increased safety risk for our students, full access may be given. Normal levels of supervision will be provided.

Option B: Limited Access

If the risk level of the applicant with a criminal history is low, but still questionable, a limited role may be approved for the individual. Involvement may be on a short-term or trial basis with an appropriate and defined role. The individual should be limited to only those roles with significant levels of supervision. Limited access may be permanent or an applicant may be given a process to earn incrementally more trust over time and eventually full access. Provide a written copy of these limitations to the applicant and keep them in his or her personnel file.

Option C: Denied Access

If the determination is made to deny an applicant altogether, documentation of this decision should be kept in the personnel files of the Chapter, and all processes described in the Fair Credit Reporting Act and YFC policies should be followed.

Adverse Action Notification Requirement

If an adverse action, such as refusing or limiting an applicant's role, is to be taken based on the results of a background check then YFC is required by the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) to provide appropriate notice to the applicant. YFC's preferred vendor for background screening will provide Chapters using their services with the appropriate information to assist with proper notification to employee and volunteer applicants adversely affected as a result of their background check results.

YFC Impact Implementation

Youth for Christ Chapters must follow the identified guidelines for recording applicable screening and selection information in respective employee or volunteer records in the Youth for Christ Impact online system. Employees should refer to the Impact System guidelines and instructions for correctly entering the necessary information.

Part Two

Training & Safety

Training

Goal: Every YFC employee and volunteer will know how to fulfill their God-given responsibility for the safety of young people, and have an understanding of YFC's safety standards and policies.

Policy Statement

All YFC employees, regardless of their role, and all volunteers with access to kids will be aware of common tactics of sexual predators and warning signs of abuse to be best prepared to protect YFC against sexual misconduct. They will also demonstrate a basic understanding of YFC's Safety Standards.

Training Blueprint

Part of YFC's Training Blueprint for all full time and part time employees and volunteers is an online orientation. Through this online orientation, YFC employees and volunteers will complete a required curriculum designed for them. Completion of this Safety Training will count toward YFC credentials.

Curriculum

For all employees, the Safety Training is to be completed within one week of hire. This curriculum will consist of two modules: Meet Sam (ARMATUS), It Happened to Me (ARMATUS).

For all volunteers with access to kids, the training is to be completed before the volunteers are allowed to have unsupervised access to young people. The volunteer curriculum is called Abuse Risk Management for Volunteers Module (ARMATUS).

An On-line Training Quick Start guide is available to provide you step by step instructions on accessing these courses. Contact the Risk Management Department at riskmanagement@yfc.net to request a copy of this guide.

Recurring Safety Training

All YFC employees and volunteers will participate in recurring safety training on an annual basis, or more frequently as deemed necessary by Youth for Christ or the local Chapter leadership. The recurring safety training may include either online training or in-person sessions. For a list of suggested advanced training options contact riskmanagement@yfc.net

Policy Compliance

In addition to completing this safety training, all YFC employees should be familiar with the following documents, and comply with them at all times:

- YFC's Standards of Conduct & Living the Life of a Leader
- The YFC Statement of Faith

- Employment Handbook and if applicable, Department Handbook
- This Safety Standards Document

Group Training

The Armatus Abuse training is best done on an individual basis. However, in special circumstances, exceptions can be made (by request only) to use a group setting. Contact Risk Management (riskmanagment@yfc.net) for guidelines, permission and resources.

Driving

Goal: YFC maintains a high standard for driving kids on behalf of the ministry.

Policy Statement

YFC will be selective in determining who will transport kids, insisting on minimum standards for age, driving record, and personal insurance levels.

Vans

Fifteen passenger extended body length vans may not be owned, borrowed, rented, or otherwise used, even if the benches are removed to reduce seating capacity. These vehicles have been determined by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, YFC's insurance broker and legal counsel to have an unacceptably high rollover rate. Our national board had prohibited their use in YFC.

Driver Requirements

- Only drivers 21 years or older may transport youth for YFC.
- Drivers must be licensed drivers in good standing, and a copy of their current valid license should be kept on file in the YFC office.
- To transport kids in their personal vehicles, drivers need to have current insurance that meets a minimum of \$300,000 aggregate, \$100,000 per incident limits. A copy of their current valid insurance declaration page should be kept on file in the YFC office.

Driving Safety

- Obey all traffic laws.
- Focus on the road at all times, and seek to eliminate distractions including but not limited to GPS devices, cell phones, etc.
- Do not drive and text, access email or use the web with handheld devices while transporting youth. Hands free cell phone operation is recommended, and required where mandated by law.
- Every YFC Chapter and affiliate is responsible to be aware of and comply with any applicable local or state laws.
- Supervisors must communicate the driving standards, requirements, and policy to all employees and volunteers.

- We recommend having a third person present when transporting youth. When this is not possible, in circumstances where it is necessary to drive kids one on one, males drive males and females drive females.
- We recommend having parent approval and knowledge when driving a student for all YFC events or activities.

What if a Motor Vehicle Background Check Indicates Violations?

Each person's report needs to be evaluated to determine if it will be appropriate for him or her to be allowed to drive youth in a private or organizational vehicle (i.e. Chapter van). If the report reveals reckless behavior (i.e. driving under the influence) or a pattern of risky behavior and bad choices (i.e. multiple speeding violations) then the employee or volunteer should not be allowed to drive youth. If employees or volunteers are denied the authorization to drive youth, the issue may be reevaluated after one year provided their driving record has remained clean of any violations during the 12-month period.

Outside Groups Using YFC Vehicles

It is at your discretion to loan your YFC-owned vehicle to an outside group. However, since YFC owned vehicles are insured under our national insurance plan, we require that any user complies with the YFC standards outlined here. Additionally the group must supply you with a Certificate of Insurance naming Youth for Christ/USA, Inc. and your Chapter as additional insureds. Please make them aware of the policies described in this section on driver safety.

We strongly suggest that you personalize and use the "agreement of vehicle use" form available through Risk Management. It includes these sections of our policy, outlines that the user will be responsible for losses incurred in the event of damage/accident, and directs them on obtaining a Certificate of Insurance for you. Contact riskmanagement@yfc.net for a sample agreement.

Workplace Safety

Goal: YFC's employees will do their job in a safe environment, to protect their own physical well-being and avoid injuries at work.

Policy Statement

YFC values the men and women who dedicate themselves to reaching lost kids with the Gospel through joining YFC's paid staff or volunteer their time to do the work of an employee. A safe workplace free of unnecessary hazards or risks helps keep everyone working focused on our mission. Youth for Christ is committed to providing a safe work environment for employees, and every individual employee can help contribute to this effort.

Procedures

Always be alert to safety hazards or situations or circumstances which could potentially cause an accident or injury. Report any unsafe practices or conditions to your supervisor immediately so preventative action can be taken. Your responsible attention to the conditions of your personal workspace, as well as common areas such as hallways and meeting rooms, may prevent an unnecessary injury and contribute to the safety of all employees and guests.

Safe Workplaces

YFC/USA and all its Chapters and affiliates will maintain safe work conditions and reinforce a culture that values the safety of employees and volunteers. Common sense should be used at all times, and careless risks should be avoided. Each YFC entity should be aware of any additional local or state workplace conditions applicable to their jurisdiction.

On the Job Injuries

While we work to avoid and eliminate work injuries as much as possible, it may be inevitable that some injuries will occur in the course of employees doing their jobs. Whether the result of an accident like a slip and fall, the result of stress on joints as a result of repetitive tasks in an office, or the result of a sudden physical trauma playing sports with kids, it is critically important to report the injury (no matter how minor) and get appropriate medical attention immediately. Report to your supervisor, who sends a report to the YFC/USA Risk Management Department, and when appropriate a worker's compensation claim can be initiated.

Adult Leaders Playing Sports with Teenagers

Like other youth serving organizations, YFC has a history of significant injuries arising out of employees or volunteers participating in sports activities with kids who are often half or a third of their own age. Because of this trend, the following guidelines should be followed to prevent further injury:

- Be cognitive of your age and physical health

- Know and stay within your physical limits, understanding they may be very different than those of the kids in your ministry
- Take proper precautions; set an example by wearing all safety equipment even if kids don't
- In the event you do sustain an injury, get medical attention immediately

Student Safety

Goal: We don't want kids to be injured.

Policy Statement

Every YFC employee and volunteer will implement all ministry activities with the safety of students in mind. Young people have been entrusted to YFC and we have a responsibility to honor their safety. The physical safety of every person involved will be of primary concern in Youth for Christ.

A rich history of creativity in games, activities and relationship building is one of the hallmarks of YFC. Continued innovation is encouraged with the following considerations in mind:

- Follow recommended best and safe practices which include use of helmets, pads, harnesses, etc. and proper professional supervision for certain activities.
- Do not engage in an activity that would be considered prohibited by the criteria identified below.

YFC's Banned Activity List

A long list of approved and banned activities was produced by YFC years ago. This listing is no longer in effect. YFC staff is expected to put into action ministry activities that are safe and are in accordance with these safety standards.

Criteria for Prohibited Activities

Prohibited activities include any behaviors in which any person is encouraged or directed to:

- Participate in any illegal activity.
- Participate in any activity that YFC Insurance does not cover - see below.
- Carry out an activity that intentionally inflicts pain or injury by:
 - Ingesting any substance that could cause a potentially harmful physical reaction.
 - Violent running into or kicking another participant.
 - Dangerous or harmful electric shock (e.g. "Electric Chair" games.)
 - Sliding head-first into standing water, mud, or any other substance on a hard surface.
 - Restricting a person's mouth or airways which could prevent them from breathing (e.g. "Chubby Bunny" or choking games.)
 - Restricting a person physically which could prevent them from catching themselves in a fall.
- Execute an activity that a reasonable person would consider dangerous to life or limb.
- Perform a task or activity without what a reasonable person would consider the appropriate safety equipment and/or professional supervision.
- Any other activity specifically prohibited by the local Chapter.

Please contact the YFC/USA Risk Management Department for further questions about activities. If there is any doubt about a prospective activity check with the Director of Risk Management prior to engaging in that activity.

Specifically Prohibited Activities

- YFC's General Liability insurance does not cover rides in private aircraft.

Maintaining equipment and buildings

All YFC equipment and property should be properly maintained for the safety of all participants. Vehicles in safe operating condition, sidewalks clear of hazards, gymnasiums and recreation equipment in good condition are examples.

Kids Hurting Other Kids

Careful observation at all YFC activities will protect youth. Roughhousing, bullying, hazing, etc. will not be allowed. Specific attention to these unacceptable unsafe behaviors is developed in the Monitoring Behavior section of this document.

Part Three

Supervision

Guidelines on Interaction

Goal: Youth for Christ's goal is to provide and ensure the safety of youth in their interactions with YFC employees, volunteers, and other youth participants.

Policy Statement

YFC will promote and implement appropriate, positive interactions among individuals (adults to youth and youth to youth). This is essential in promoting God's love and truth and supports positive youth development. Conversely, inappropriate or harmful interactions have a negative impact on youth, YFC's mission and reputation. YFC will distribute information to employees and volunteers on appropriate/inappropriate behavior and positive / harmful interaction.

Procedures

Different means of interactions are described in the following "appropriate/inappropriate" lists, with supplied examples of behavior. Appropriate behaviors should be implemented, and inappropriate behaviors avoided.

Appropriate Physical Interaction

Side hugs/shoulder to shoulder hugs
Pats on the back
Handshakes and high fives
Touching hands, shoulders and arms
Arm around the shoulder

Inappropriate Physical Interaction

Full frontal hugs, extended or prolonged hugs
Kissing
Interaction behind closed doors or in isolated areas
Touching bottoms, chests, upper leg
Inappropriate wrestling
Piggy back rides
Tickling
Any type of massage youth to adult, or adult to youth
Bullying, hazing, corporal punishment
Romantic or sexual contact or viewing pornography
Any form of affection which is unwanted

In addition to promoting appropriate physical interaction, Youth for Christ is committed to promoting positive verbal communication. In addition to the following list, refer to YFC's Communications Policy and Social Media Guidelines which can be accessed through the Risk Management download section of IMPACT.

Appropriate Communication

Praise
Positive reinforcement
Appropriate jokes

Inappropriate Communication

Harsh or threatening language or cursing
Derogatory remarks, belittling or name calling
Risqué or sexual jokes or sexually provocative language

Casual conversation	Involving youth in an adult's personal problems
Positive electronic communication	Secret or private electronic communications
	Sharing secrets with youth

Ensuring Safe Environments

Goal: To keep youth, volunteers, and employees from situations in which they are at increased risk for sexual, physical, and/or verbal exploitation and abuse.

Policy Statement

Youth for Christ will take the appropriate steps to provide safe environments in the variety of settings where ministry occurs; whether in a home, club setting, school, church, community facility, YFC owned/operated facility, or a camp/retreat center. Employees and volunteers will monitor potential places where abuse can occur. Removing and minimizing the places where sexual or other abuse can occur will provide the greatest opportunity for the YFC mission to be accomplished.

General Ministry Supervision Guidelines

Whenever kids are present, special attention is sometimes needed in areas or situations which are known to create special risk. These include isolated areas, unstructured time and the presence of high-risk youth. The following guidelines should be followed:

Isolated areas

Identification of potential isolated areas is critical. Special plans for limiting access, monitoring isolated areas, and controlling access are needed.

Unstructured times

- Provide adequate staff/adult on-site presence during all unstructured times.
- Clearly identify areas of concern and potentially problematic kids, and make appropriate staffing plans.
- Assign staff to be in isolated places to where youth may drift.
- Specifically assign staff/adults to hang with youth that cause concern.
- Train staff/adults to be on alert for behavior that indicates potential trouble.

High-risk youth present

- More staff are needed to stay in contact with high-risk youth (i.e. implement a 3:1 youth to staff ratio rather than common 7:1.) Refer to Ministry Ratios for Best Practices which can be accessed through instructions in the Risk Management Documents section of Impact.
- Constant contact/monitoring is necessary.
- Sleeping assignments need to be well thought through and implemented.
- Implement good communication with camp program leadership to mobilize all camp personnel in observation/reporting concern.

Ministry in Private Homes

Common “community” areas of the home where kids are allowed to have access should be identified, and youth should only be in rooms open to everyone. Certain areas should be designated as “off-limits” by setting specific and narrow boundaries where supervision is difficult to provide. No employee or volunteer should ever be alone with a youth in a private room or area of the house. Bedrooms are to be off limits.

At least one other adult should be present. If the event is co-ed, male and female adult representation with appropriate gender ratios should be maintained. Leaders should clearly designate the most appropriate bathroom for youth to use. Only one youth should be in the bathroom at a time.

Overnight events in private homes are prohibited unless expressly approved in advance by the Executive Director. Further information can be found in the *Overnight Events* section of this document.

Ministry in Schools, Community Settings and YFC Owned or Operated Facilities

On field trips, events, and special outings, participants must respectfully submit to the safety standards and policies set forth by the location they are visiting. Leaders should remind volunteers and employees that the supervision of behavior and safety is still as important as they would be in a more confined meeting place, if not more. These events are a privilege that speak of our organization and can either create or eliminate future possibilities.

Appropriate supervision, with appropriate gender ratios, should be provided to all YFC sponsored activities. Special consideration should be given based on the age of the youth and population involved.

Youth should be in designated areas and in a group setting. Youth should not be allowed to wander throughout a facility by themselves. They must be willing to participate in the YFC sponsored activities. Designate certain areas of the ministry site as off-limits by setting specific and narrow boundaries to prevent youth from going into areas difficult to supervise.

Leaders should stay visible, and not put themselves in positions of being alone with a youth where there are no other people present. If youth are in multiple places within a facility, ensure that all staff are assigned specific areas to supervise. This “zone monitoring” ensures that all accessible areas are monitored. Assign more staff to high-risk areas and activities (i.e. water activities, playgrounds, and isolated areas, etc.).

Leaders must supervise who is coming and leaving the event. It is important to know who is among the group, especially if there are unrecognized faces. A warm welcome or ‘sad to see you leaving so soon’ acknowledges presence and departure.

YFC staff should randomly and periodically supervise bathrooms to ensure that youth are not lingering there. It is important that staff periodically check restrooms so that youth know that an adult could walk in at any time.

If possible, employees and volunteers should use staff-only bathrooms.

Juvenile Detention, Institutions and Restricted Access

Most institutions and restricted access facilities will already have policies and procedures in place that may or may not seem to cause redundancies with those of YFC. (For example: background checks, mandatory reporting, screenings, reference checks, interviews, etc.) Representatives of Youth for Christ are to abide by these measures first and foremost as well as those set by Youth for Christ; even in the event that efforts are being duplicated. Out of respect for the safety and privacy of youth, volunteers and employees of YFC, we are committed to show respect to those facilities in which we are invited guests.

Camps & Retreat Centers

Some camps and retreat centers will already have policies and procedures for youth safety in place. YFC leadership should abide by these measures. Major risk areas include unstructured times, groups with mixed age groups, off-site excursions and isolated areas, when high-risk youth are present and at bedtime. The following guidelines should be followed:

Groups with mixed age groups

- Do not allow mixed age groups to sleep in the same rooms.
- Provide a higher ratio of staff: adults with the younger age group.
- Train staff/adults to be alert to inappropriate/unusual attention from older youth with the younger youth.
- Have separate programming/eating schedules.

Ideally, do not have camps/retreats with mixed age groups.

Off-site excursions

As always, an adequate number of adults should attend with the youth. Adults should have separated sleeping space within eye sight of the sleeping arrangements of the youth.

Bedtime

- Separate male and female sleeping accommodations are essential.
- Employees or volunteers will not share a bed with a student.
- Employees or volunteers will place themselves in a position for maximum observation during sleeping hours.
- All youth will be accounted for at bedtime.
- Close observation and monitoring will be implemented during bedtime and sleeping times.

Overnight Events

Overnight stays present unique risks to youth, staff and volunteers. They often involve changing clothes, groups of both genders and different ages in a more intimate atmosphere than usual, more unstructured activities, and increased supervision demands for staff and volunteers.

Supervision Guidelines

- All overnight activities must be documented and approved in writing by the Executive Director.
- Supervisors are expected to regularly and randomly observe overnight activities on a scheduled and periodic basis.
- The Executive Director should appoint a "lead" staff or volunteer to supervise the overnight.
- Parents should be provided with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youth to attend the overnight event.
- Determine the appropriate staff-to-youth or volunteer-to-youth ratios before the event and schedule staff and volunteers accordingly.
- Separate the male and female youth into separate rooms and post staff and volunteers at the entrances and exits to these rooms. If this is not feasible, separate males and females by as much space as possible.
- Assign each employee or volunteer to a specific group of youth to supervise.

Overnights at Employee's or Volunteer's Home

- Overnight stays at private homes are prohibited unless approved by the Executive Director.
- At least two YFC staff or volunteers need to be present.
- Provide parents with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youth to attend the overnight.
- Complete a sex offender registry check on any other adult who will be in the home during the overnight.

Bringing a Youth Into Your Home

Having a young person from your ministry come to live in a staff's home is an extreme solution that can sometimes be warranted, but too often is rushed into as a shortcut that avoids dealing with problems at home.

Please seek guidance from local YFC leadership, YFC/USA leadership, and YFC/USA Risk Management before you take this step. You can access our cautionary guidelines for such a situation at riskmanagement@yfc.net

Monitoring Behavior

Goal: To prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors and to reinforce appropriate behaviors.

Policy Statement

Youth for Christ recognizes that monitoring and supervision are critical functions of abuse prevention. Excellent supervision and monitoring will provide protection to youth, employees, volunteers, and YFC itself. When interactions are monitored, allegations of abuse or wrongful acts are more easily and accurately investigated and resolved. At the foundation of our ministry, we should protect the youth in our communities. In addition, community trust is at stake. Community partners and stakeholders rely on the diligence of our staff and board to ensure the safety of the youth we serve.

Procedures for General Supervision

Employees and volunteers will be appropriately supervised anytime there are youth involved in an YFC activity or YFC sponsored event. Leadership will look for any behavior that has the appearance of being inappropriate, regardless of whether the initiator is an adult volunteer, employee, student helper, parent or other students.

Administrative and Supervisory Visits to All Ministry Sites

Executive Directors, Ministry Directors and/or designated leadership will regularly visit all YFC ministries to ensure that all activities are well-managed and that policies are observed by all in attendance.

Evaluations

YFC leaders should use multiple monitoring methods to get a clear picture of how individuals are interacting. Employee and volunteer supervision should include:

- a. Formal supervision, including regular written evaluations.
- b. Informal supervision, including regular and random observations. Contact with people and organizations who know your leaders is useful. Validating their behavior and activity with others (churches, students in their ministry, etc.) will strengthen your awareness of your leaders.

Procedures for Monitoring Youth Interaction

When at all possible, at least two adult leaders should be present when interacting with youth - ministry should never be done alone. One adult should not be alone behind closed doors with one young person. This not only protects youth from abuse, but also protects leaders from false allegations.

In circumstances when it is not possible to have two adults present, all of the following should be implemented:

- One on one meetings should occur in a public place
- Parental approval should be obtained and
- Any parental guidelines followed
- Meet during the day/avoid late night meetings
- Limit physical affection
- When counseling, have an open door or clear line of sight with others present

Ratios

Each program will follow the approved guidelines for their adult to student ratios. The employee or volunteer-to-youth ratio should be adjusted for ministries that serve youth with special needs and the circumstances of the event/facility. (See *Growth Guides*, available through the National Ministries Department.)

Youth Supervision

Leaders should take special note of youth who separate themselves from the group (either alone or with other youth). Students that are participating in YFC events/functions are not allowed inappropriate contact with other youth who are not YFC participants. Students should not engage in illegal activity with other students or adults.

Hazing & Bullying

There is zero tolerance for the act of "hazing." Hazing is defined as any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades, or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. This encompasses employees, volunteers, and students between peer groups and across groups.

There is a zero tolerance for bullying. Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength, usually repeated over time. Bullying involves such actions as hitting/punching, teasing/name-calling (verbal bullying), or intimidation through gestures or social exclusion. Bullying also includes cyber-bullying (intimidation through use of technology).

PDA (Public Displays of Affection)

Provide special attention/supervision to youth who are attracted to other youth. Couples should not be allowed to "make-out," sit under blankets together, display inappropriate physical affection, and/or be in isolated areas.

Mixed Age Groups

In most incidents involving one youth abusing another youth, the youth are from different age groups. Each ministry is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve youth from different age groups.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of the necessity of close supervision when monitoring programs that include youth of different ages.

Teen Leadership Programs

Older teens who participate in teen leadership programs are still youth and not staff or volunteers. Therefore, even though they are often given more responsibility, teens in leadership programs need to be provided guidelines regarding appropriate behavior, and then supervised accordingly. In addition, employees and volunteers must understand and recognize that these teens are still youth and not their peers.

Therefore, the following guidelines are recommended for teen leadership programs. Adult leaders should:

Create a screening process for teen leaders which includes:

- A standard application
- An interview with behaviorally based interview questions
- References (from teachers, counselors, family friends, etc.)

Train teen leaders in their role in programs and on policies about appropriate and inappropriate interactions. This training should include the following information:

- Appropriate and inappropriate physical and verbal interactions and the importance of maintaining behavioral boundaries between teen leaders and younger adolescents and between teen leaders and employees or volunteers.
- Prohibit teen leaders from being one-on-one with younger adolescents.
- Prohibit teen leaders from escorting younger adolescents to the bathrooms.
- Prohibit teen leaders from assisting younger adolescents with changing their clothes.

Create a system to monitor the teen leaders.

- Designate a specific employee or volunteer who is in charge of the teen leadership program and its participants.
- Teen leaders should wear clothing or lanyards that identify them as leaders-in-training and differentiate them from both employees and volunteers and from the younger adolescents. A supervisor should conduct regular (daily if a camp/retreat setting) check-ins with teen leaders and their program supervisors.
- Consider requiring teen leaders to keep a log documenting their activities and any problems they encounter. The program supervisor should review these logs.

Responding to Inappropriate Behavior

Goal: To prevent, recognize, and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors and to reinforce appropriate behaviors.

Policy Statement

All YFC employees and volunteers should be very familiar with the guidelines set forth in the "Guidelines on Interaction" section of this policy manual. If interactions among adults and youth or between youth-to-youth fall outside of these guidelines, then employees and volunteers should take note and follow the below reporting procedures. When uncertain if a behavior was inappropriate or not, employees or volunteers should approach their direct supervisor to ask about the situation. And if at any point the employee or volunteer questions a situation, they should approach their supervisor about it as soon as possible. Additionally, if an employee or volunteer has breached a policy, even when child sexual abuse is not suspected, action must be taken with that employee or volunteer to prevent future breaches of policy (See the Progressive Discipline Procedures section of this document).

Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Adult Behavior

Because YFC is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, every employee and volunteer at YFC is considered an active participant in the protection of youth. Employees and volunteers should keep their eyes open for suspicious or inappropriate behaviors between adult leaders and youth. In the event that employees or volunteers observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors on the part of other adult leaders, they should immediately report their observations. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth will be taken seriously. YFC's procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

Action Steps for Leaders:

1. Interrupt the behavior.
2. Report the behavior to your supervisor. If the report is about your supervisor, contact the next level of management and/or make an anonymous report using our Toll-Free anonymous reporting line: 866.607.SAFE (Hours: 24 Hours, 7 Days a Week)
3. Keep a written record of the incident and your report but do not conduct an investigation. Keep reporting until you are satisfied that action has been taken.

Reporting to Supervisor

Employees and volunteers are obliged to report any suspected or known abuse of youth perpetrated by employees or volunteers directly to YFC leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following within 24 hours of the incident occurring:

1. Immediate supervisor

2. Executive Director
3. Local Board of Directors
4. National Field Director
5. Director of Risk Management at the National Service Center
6. Optional: Anonymous Reporting Hotline
Toll-Free: 866.607.SAFE
Hours: 24 Hours, 7 Days a Week

Reporting to Legal Authorities

Since 2004 the YFC/USA National Board has required that all YFC ministries regard themselves as mandatory reporting agencies regardless of the laws or guidelines in their respective states. Therefore, all employees and volunteers will report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth, past or present –whether on or off YFC property or whether perpetrated by staff, volunteers, or others—to state authorities. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice.

Every state has different reporting guidelines. Please contact Risk Management (riskmanagement@yfc.net) for a complete listing of these laws for each state.

Supervisory Response

When an Executive Director receives a report of abuse or suspected abuse, it can be a shocking and challenging situation to face. It is important not to try to handle such a situation in isolation, but to rely on the systems and support available. It is also very important to respond in a planned, methodical way according to the following steps, and not try to 'wing it.'

- Determine the immediate needs of the victim.
- Do not unnecessarily involve people in communication about the incident or allegation. Discretion ensures we do not unintentionally slander or discredit in the case an allegation proves false.
- The Executive Director should ensure that the incident has been reported to the proper legal authorities and the Director of Risk Management at the National Service Center.
- Notify the Chapter's senior leadership and Board of Directors.
- Immediately suspend the accused and remove from access to youth. Do this in person if possible, with a witness present, and explain clearly why this action is being taken. Document this conversation. In addition, deliver to the accused a written statement formally confirming the suspension
- If appropriate/authorized by the authorities, the YFC Director may be responsible for notifying the parents/guardians.
- Gather and document all information surrounding the incident including all conversations and actions taken via the Incident Report Form.
- If abuse is confirmed, terminate the employee or volunteer immediately.

- Appoint a single person in your Chapter to field all questions about the accusation or the accused.
- If allegations prove to be true, prepare a media response. The Risk Management Department is available to help prepare this, and should be informed of your intended plan.

Additional crisis resources are available. The Crisis Management Manual and The Response to Abuse Allegations documents are available through riskmanagement@yfc.net

Preventing Repeat Problems

After reviewing suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations, YFC leadership should determine if a system changes are needed to prevent future issues. These changes could include:

- Increased supervision of the employee, volunteer or program.
- Revised policies or procedures.
- Additional training.

Responding to Inappropriate or Sexualized Behaviors in Youth

Unfortunately, youth to youth abuse does happen and has increased significantly in the past few years. Youth-to-youth sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because employees and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations, or may not know how.

Sexualized behavior can be defined as, but not limited to, any type of sexual acting out that involves physical touch regardless if is considered consensual or "age appropriate." Youth sexualized behavior could also include any type of non-contact sexual activity including exposing themselves to others, using sexualized names, using inappropriate sexual language, sexual hazing, making sexual gestures, exposing others to pornography, taking and sharing inappropriate pictures of a sexual nature (i.e. sexting), or playing sexualized games (i.e. truth or dare).

Most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the YFC environment safe. In order to adequately respond to and track incidents which occur at a YFC sponsored event, all sexual activity between youth and sexualized behaviors of youth must be consistently documented.

In the event that an employee or volunteer sees a youth exhibit sexualized behaviors or suspects youth-to-youth sexual activity, the employee or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

- Interrupt the behavior and separate the youth. Do not investigate.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor or YFC director.
- The YFC director is responsible for notifying the parents/guardians of youth involved.
- Document your report with factual information only. Opinions should not be included on the incident report.

In the event that an employee/volunteer supervisor or YFC leadership receives a report of a youth's sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the director should do the following:

- Determine the appropriate YFC employee to conduct an internal review of the incident.
- The YFC director is responsible for notifying the parents/guardians of the youth involved.
- Notify the authorities if required by state reporting mandates.
- Document the incident and YFC's response.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident.
- Determine if the youth involved needs to be suspended from future YFC involvement.

After the internal review of the sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, YFC will determine what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence, such as:

- Review the need for additional supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.
- Alert others in the organization.

Progressive Discipline

Goal: YFC will consistently and appropriately respond to breaches of policy, inappropriate behavior or misconduct by employees and volunteers.

Policy

YFC seeks to maintain the highest quality employees and volunteers who exhibit exemplary conduct and superior performance. To this end, supervisors must inform all employees and volunteers of expectations regarding the performance of their roles, how to conform to YFC's policies, and how well their performance meets expectations.

Procedures

When performance or conduct by an employee or volunteer does not meet the expectations of YFC, supervisors shall address the problem(s) in a timely and equitable manner. The procedure would normally include four steps: 1) Counseling (Verbal Warning), 2) Formal Warning, 3) Probation, and 4) Termination.

YFC has a zero tolerance for sexual misconduct with youth. Therefore, if any credible allegation is made, the accused employee or volunteer should be suspended from any involvement with youth until an investigation can be conducted. If allegations are admitted or confirmed for sexual misconduct an employee or volunteer should be terminated immediately. If the allegations prove baseless or are proven false, the employee or volunteer may be reinstated to work with youth. If allegations are not proven or admitted, but are credible, you still may terminate the employee. This can be a very sensitive legal situation. Please seek legal counsel locally or through YFC/USA HR (HR@yfc.net) or YFC's Legal Department.

All documents regarding the Progressive Discipline Procedure should be retained in the file of the employee or volunteer, including documentation from all meetings.

Steps in Progressive Discipline

1. **Counseling (Verbal Warning)** - A large portion of performance and conduct deficiencies are identifiable and in many cases, can be addressed and resolved through informal counseling between the supervisor and the employee or volunteer. Effective counseling includes the following:
 - Clear identification of the problem with specific examples.
 - A mutually agreed upon action plan to resolve the problem.
 - Documentation of the counseling and communication, which then should be kept in the file of the counseled individual.
2. **Formal Written Warning** - Formal warnings should be initiated when 1) counseling fails to resolve the problem, or 2) the problem is of such a serious nature that immediate and formal resolution is necessitated.

- Formal warnings should be documented using the following format:
 - A specific description of the problem.
 - Reference to any counseling that was attempted.
 - A statement of the policy that was violated.
 - A summary of corrective actions to be taken.
 - A statement of the consequences of failure to resolve the problem(s).
 - A reasonable time frame for resolution (often 15 to 30 days).
 - Formal warnings should be presented at a meeting with the supervisor.
 - Employees and volunteers will sign the Formal Warning Document. Dates and names of persons included in meeting should be listed on documentation.
 - Formal Warning Documents and all accompanying materials should be stored in the file of the individual who receives the warning.
 - If formal warnings relate to organizational policies for the protection of youth, Formal Warning Documents should be sent to the Executive Director and Director of Risk Management at the National Service Center.
3. **Probation** - Probation is the third step in the progressive discipline procedure prior to dismissal.
- Probation should be initiated when the warning process has not succeeded, or when the misconduct is such that a second infraction would clearly warrant termination.
 - The probation process consists of the same elements as the formal warning process with emphasis on the fact that failure to meet the conditions of the probation will result in termination. Significant improvement must be consistently demonstrated during the probation period (typically 30 days).
 - A second Formal Warning Document should be completed when the employee or volunteer is placed on probation.
 - At the successful conclusion of probation, the employee or volunteer should be notified in writing that he or she is no longer under probation.
4. **Termination** - Termination should be administered under one of two conditions:
- Failure to improve conduct during the steps of progressive discipline.
 - Serious and major offenses, including but not limited to violations of the organizational policies for the protection of youth.

Resources and Forms are Available Online in IMPACT

They include the following:

YFC/USA Board Resolutions, June 2004

Applications Forms

Background Screening Release

Communication Policy

Social Media Guidelines

Ministry Ratios for Best Practices

Summary of State Laws for Reporting

Incident Report Form

Parental Release Form