



St. Marys Methodist Church

Children and Youth Ministry Safety Plan

¹⁴ Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”
Matthew 19:14

As with many areas of church work, the ministries of children/youth rely heavily on the dedication of loving, trustworthy adult volunteer leaders. Safeguards must be in place in recruiting, training, and maintaining a team of adult leaders to disciple the youngest of our congregation.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus said it best in the scripture above. In this Ministry Safety Plan, you will see how we, as St. Marys Methodist Church intend to live that out.

Recruiting and Screening

- 6-month affiliation rule (must be affiliated with our church or known to a staff person at least 6 months)
 - Anyone serving in children and/or youth ministry must be affiliated with the congregation or lead ministry area staff for at least 6 months before being screened to serve.
- Criminal Background Check (State/County/National)
 - Each volunteer recruited must pass a criminal background check through Protect My Ministry. Anyone convicted of a violent, sexual, or children related crime will be denied eligibility to serve with children and youth.
 - Background checks will be renewed every two years.
- Driver's License Check (required for driving church vans and transporting in personal vehicles – if necessary)
 - Anyone with a DUI or reckless driving charge will not be eligible to drive church owned vehicle or transport children/youth for church sponsored events.

Basic Supervisory Policy

- Two Adult Rule (not related to each other)
 - Every children/youth ministry activity should have at least two unrelated adults. In situations where two adults are unable to be present, a “floater” (an adult who roams from classroom to classroom checking in) should be in place. At no point should an adult volunteer be completely alone with a child/youth.
- Windows in all classrooms

- Each classroom must have windows to enable the “floater” to check in when needed.
- No volunteers under 18 in charge
 - At no point should a youth be in complete charge of any child/youth. Youth may serve in children’s ministry in an assistant role.
- 5-Year Older Rule
 - As an extra layer of relationship protection, adults must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they are supervising.
- Open door counseling
 - We understand that situations do arise for one-on-one counsel with children/youth. In cases of such need the office or classroom door must remain open or the adult and child/youth must meet in a public place in which the adult is known to staff such as a frequented restaurant or outside in public eye.
- First Aid/ CPR training (at least one person on site who is certified)
 - We will strive to certify all ministry leaders willing to be trained and at least one certified adult leader will be present at children/youth activities.
- Participation covenant for all participants/leaders
 - Upon clear background checks and training, each ministry leader read and sign the “Children and Youth Ministry Leader Covenant” (attached) and adhere to such.
- Every two years orientation for staff and volunteers
 - We will hold refresher training on church policy and court mandated reporting every two years as needed for ministry leaders.
- No unsupervised time (Children 10 years and younger)
 - At no time should children 10 years old and younger be on campus unsupervised by a parent or ministry leader.

Overnight Trips

- In the occurrence of overnight trips and events (such as retreats, campouts, and mission trips), the staff leader will recruit 1 adult leader per 6 children/youth of the same gender in attendance for the event.
- At no point should adults be present in private bathroom areas or present when children/youth are changing clothes.
- At no point should an adult share a bed with a child/youth (even of the same family).

- Siblings of the same gender may share queen size beds and larger.
- At no point should males be in female sleeping quarters/bathrooms.
- At no point should females be in male sleeping quarters/bathrooms.
- At no point should two same gender children/youth in a romantic relationship share sleeping quarters/bathrooms.

Child Abuse and Neglect

- Under Georgia law, all volunteers are **mandated child abuse reporters**. If a child reports to you that they have been abused or you suspect any type of abuse or neglect, report it immediately report to the children's or youth ministry director. **Do not question the child or ask for details**. Simply report what you observe or what the child tells you to a church staff person.
- See training presentation for Court Mandated Reporter Training.

Conclusion

All of these safeguards are in place to appropriately care for and protect the children/youth, and adult leaders of our congregation. Thank you for your willingness to serve in the vital ministries of children and youth.



St. Marys Methodist Church

Children and Youth Covenant

I (print name) _____ accept the responsibility of assisting the children and youth ministry staff, parents, and fellow volunteers in the fulfillment of shepherding the children and youth in Christian love, and accept to provide facilities and opportunities for Christian nurture and fellowship.

- I will use a calm loving tone in the way we speak to the children and youth under my care.
- I will not single out a child or youth with discipline in front of their peers, but rather speak to them privately if necessary.
- As a vital part of this ministry, I realize that am an example of Christ to the children and youth with whom I interact. I will do my best to live a life worthy of such a calling.
- I understand that if I suspect that a student has been physically, sexually, or emotionally neglected or abused that, I am, by law required to report this suspicion. As a volunteer, I will not handle the situation myself, but will notify a staff member of St. Marys Methodist Church.
- I acknowledge that I have completed and understand the Ministry Safety Training with a staff member of St. Marys Methodist Church.

Most importantly, with God's help I will so order my life after the example of Christ, that these children and youth, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.

Participant Signature

Date

Staff Witness Signature

Date