

# Policy & Procedure Manual

Guidelines for Working with Youth Grades 7-12

# WELCOME TO LOL YOUTH!

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DEAR YOUTH VOLUNTEERS,

Welcome aboard! We are thrilled to have you on the LOL youth team! You are going to be a tremendous asset to our youth ministry and you will be blessed in the process. Thank you for giving your time to serve the Lord by serving the teenagers of Lord of Life and their families. As we partner with parents and other volunteers in connecting teens to Jesus, you are making an eternal difference. The Lord of Life staff is committed to praying for you weekly – that as you serve, your relationships with God and others will flourish, and that all God has planned for you will come about with ease and grace. Enjoy the journey!

Peace be with you,

Patrick Nazaroff

*Director of Youth Ministry*



## Goals for Youth Ministry

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### *Provide a Youth-Friendly Environment*

As members of the Youth Ministry team, everything we do is done with the purpose of reaching the hearts of youth with Jesus' message. From special events to weekly services, our goal is to present the Word in an exciting and educational manner. We are committed to providing exceptional leaders, small groups and experiences for youth 7<sup>th</sup> grade through College. Our teaching methods, activities, and gatherings reflect the importance God places on youth.

### *Provide Relevant Teaching*

We believe God's message stays the same, but the way it is expressed and carried out can vary. The Youth Ministry team desires to stay current with music, games, topics, and trends that are morally appropriate and culturally relevant to youth. Our intention is to create a fun and exciting atmosphere where youth can learn, grow, and apply God's Word in everyday life.

### *Provide Varied Experiences*

As part of the Youth Ministry team, you will strive to make learning and worship exciting, accessible, and relevant by incorporating a variety of teaching tools and methods such as small group time, large group bible study, worship, service opportunities, videos, and games.

### *Provide a Safe Environment*

A top priority of the Youth Ministry team is to develop and support a caring environment for youth. Therefore, every volunteer and staff member working with youth is required to undergo a background check and complete a training course prior to serving. All of us are committed to following the policy and procedures outlined here and in the Safe Sanctuary policy manual to ensure a welcoming and safe setting for youth activities.



## LOL YOUTH Volunteer Qualifications

### *Be an active Member of Lord of Life*

Leaders must be active participants of LOL for at least 6 months prior to working with youth. If they have not been active with LOL for more than 6 months, an interview on an individual basis must be performed by a staff member to determine reliability of working with youth.

### *Transportation*

If the volunteer is driving youth for a youth event, the driver must:

1. Have a valid driver's license
2. Be at least 21 years old
3. Have proof of car insurance
4. Not be under the influence of any chemical substance that impairs driving – including alcohol, illegal drugs or over-the-counter drugs, etc.
5. No cell phone use in the car by driver
6. Have passed a background check and completed safe sanctuary training

### *Provide a Safe Environment*

One of LOL Youth's top priorities is to develop and support a caring and safe volunteer team. Every volunteer and staff member working with youth is required to undergo a background check and personal interview prior to serving.

### *Volunteering at Lord of Life*

Being a youth mentor and volunteer is a privilege at Lord of Life. Prospective volunteers will meet with Staff or Pastors to be involved within the program. Dismissal or suspension of a volunteer will be done at the discretion of Staff and Pastors.



# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

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## *Basic Requirements*

The Youth Ministry team includes a wide variety of people, but we all have a couple of things in common: We are all at least 21 years of age and we all find joy and value in working with youth.

Youth Ministry team members are church leaders and role models who set a good example through appropriate behavior and language use is critical to our ability to nurture faith and share God's love. Youth Ministry Team members will:

- Use positive, encouraging language that reflects a caring and loving attitude
- Be professional, friendly, responsive, and accessible toward children and their families
- Be an active participant in Lord of Life's congregational life
- Refrain from using foul, offensive, derisive, or sexualized language while in the presence of youth
- Refrain from gossiping or engaging in conversations involving adult-only behavior while in the presence of youth
- Refrain from using tobacco products, alcohol, recreational drugs, and over-the-counter medications that can impair judgment while in the presence of youth
- Refrain from engaging in romantic or sexualized behavior with another adult (spouse or otherwise) while in the presence of youth
- Refrain from using negative reinforcement to control behavior such as grabbing, spanking, pinching, shaking, yelling, belittling, or name-calling
- Refrain from engaging in any abusive behavior that violates Lord of Life's Safe Sanctuary policy

## *Communication*

Honest and timely communication is a cornerstone of a successful team experience. If you are experiencing any sort of difficulty such as the behavior of a specific child or group of children, equipment or materials, other team members, or anything else that impacts your experience as a member of the LOL Youth team, please bring it to the attention of the Director of Youth Ministry. It is important to not let difficult situations fester and grow worse by not addressing them or by discussing them with people who cannot help resolve them.

## *Being Absent*

Life is busy and messy and sometimes it is difficult to fulfill our volunteering or work commitments. Please make the Youth Ministry Director aware of planned and unplanned absences by calling, texting, or emailing as soon as possible so coverage can be arranged.

## *Preparation/Punctuality*

Group or event leaders and helpers should plan on arriving at least 15 minutes before the start of any scheduled event or Sunday program. You will feel more relaxed and your time will go more smoothly if you are ready and waiting when the youth begin to arrive.



## *Background Check / Intolerable Actions*

Criminal background checks will be performed on anyone over 18 years of age seeking to serve on the LOL Youth team after that person has signed the authorization/waiver/indemnity form. Criminal background checks will be performed every two years on team members or as deemed necessary. Only qualified members of Lord of Life staff will have access to the criminal background check reports. Recommendations will be given by this individual(s) to the Director of Youth Ministry regarding each person seeking to serve.

Any prospective team member that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse will not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with minors. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the criminal background check, the following will automatically disqualify a person from serving in any activities or program that would give him/her access to minors:

- Criminal homicide
- Aggravated assault
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault (rape)
- Aggravated sexual assault
- Injury to a child
- Incest
- Indecency with a child
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child
- Possession or promotion of child pornography
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor
- Employment harmful to children
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure
- Enticing a child
- Other incidents judged by the discretion of Staff and Pastors

If a member of our congregation or outside volunteer is charged with any of the above (but before conviction), that person will be required to step aside in their role as a youth mentor until the court case has been resolved. Reinstatement of a mentor after the court case resolution will occur at the discretion of staff and pastors.

Failure to report the following incidences are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted. Any knowledge of the following acts, either subjective or objective, are to be immediately reported to a Lord of Life staff member after the safety of the minor child or youth has been assured:

- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor



- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of Lord of Life Church
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic material at any function of Lord of Life Church
- The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs
- The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while participating in a function for minors at Lord of Life Church

### *Conduct with Youth*

Leaders will refrain from any actions or use of language that is harmful. This could include:

- Physical actions, such as pushing, grabbing, or unwanted physical conduct
- Use of profanity
- Criticizing, gossiping, public ridicule, demeaning facial gestures
- Inappropriate sexual conduct
- Any suggestive or sexual contact with youth is strictly prohibited.
- Any romantic relationship between adult and youth is strictly prohibited.

### *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is expected of all volunteers. What is shared in a group setting should stay within that group setting. What is shared in private to a leader, staff member, or volunteer should be between them. A volunteer may ask a staff member for advice on how to deal with a situation, but they should never talk about something private with other youth. But there are a few exceptions to this rule:

- If a youth discusses a desire to self-harm, including cutting, suicidal thoughts and actions, etc.
- If a youth discusses a desire to harm others.
- If a youth discusses that someone has harmed him/her or he/she is a victim of abuse, physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, etc.
- If a youth knows someone else who has expressed these things to them.
- If a youth discusses a leader, volunteer, or staff member who is in violation of the above code of conduct.

If a youth confides in you any of these points, share them with the Youth Director as quickly as possible. In many of the above cases we would need to report the information to government agencies and involve the youth's parents as quickly as possible. If the abuser in question is the youth leader, report it immediately to a Pastor at LOL.

If a youth ask a leader to listen to them but not tell anyone else, an appropriate response is "I can't promise that I will not tell appropriate people what you discuss with me if it involves causing harm to yourself or other people. I can promise I will listen and support you with this issue in whatever way I can with God's help. Do you understand? If so, then what do you need to tell me?"



## *Training*

We provide two main training opportunities for volunteers and staff who work with youth: Safe Sanctuary Training, which focuses on maintaining an environment free of abuses of sex, violence, and harassment; and, Mentor Training, which focuses on equipping small group leaders with the tools and techniques they need to make their time with the kids effective and enjoyable. Other meetings might be called periodically to discuss matters pertinent to specific situations or events.

Please make every effort to attend the training sessions and meetings so that we will all remain united and informed.

## Safety and Security

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### *Child Wellness*

All Youth Ministry facilities are “well child” facilities. Sick or potentially sick youth cannot be accepted into the facility.

Symptoms for non-admission include:

- Fever over 100.4 F within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Skin rashes (impetigo, chicken pox, measles, etc.)
- Runny nose with yellow or green discharge
- Coughing associated with a cold or respiratory infection
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Parasites (ringworm, lice, mites, etc.)
- Any symptom that could possibly be contagious

If a youth becomes sick (vomiting, diarrhea, fever, severe headache, sudden rash, etc.) remove the youth from the group, make the youth as comfortable as possible, and contact the Director of Youth Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member/committee leader on duty. If possible, contact the parents, describe the situation, and ask that the youth be picked up immediately. Complete an incident report and return it to the Director of Youth Ministry.

While Youth Ministry team members will pray for the healing of a child, we are not allowed to dispense any type of medication to any youth without expressed written consent.

### *Cell Phones*

LOL Youth team members may carry a cell phone at any time; however, to reduce distractions the cell phone audio should be put on a very low or mute setting. While working with or supervising youth, refrain from using your cell phone unless you have an urgent situation or you are using it in relation to an activity in progress, such as accessing information on the Internet.



## *Photography and Social Media*

Lord of Life operates with an “opt-out” photo policy. Unless a family notifies a staff member that they wish to opt out, we can use pictures of their youth in our social media and advertising. Volunteers and staff will work together to ensure that youth who have opted out of our photo policy will not be featured on social media or advertising and will use discretion to respect the rights of these youth.

When utilizing Social Media follow these guidelines:

- Names of youth should not be posted in Social Media statuses or pictures.
- Social Media postings should not disclose sensitive or confidential information unless the person that the information concerns has given written consent to share such information. This may include medical information or other personal matters.
- For the sake of their own privacy and the well-being of the youth participants, church leaders and adult volunteers should not add or invite youth to any groups, events, pages, etc. that are not solely dedicated to activities directly related to Lord of Life youth ministries.
- While it is fine to accept youth followers on your personal social media pages, do not seek out and “request” youth followers, unless running the official youth branded Social Media profiles.
- If you do have youth followers on your Social Media sites, remember that what you display is a reflection of your ministry, the ministry of Lord of Life, and how you engage with the world. Post or comment with discretion and with the knowledge that youth will be watching.
- Pictures of unrelated youth cannot be posted on your personal Social Media account without permission of the unrelated child’s parent or legal guardian.
- When communicating with a youth in a text or through social media, only communicate between the hours of 9:00am and 9:00pm. Your communication should be short and to the point and should only be through channels that have a clear record, ( i.e. no Snapchat).
- Pictures of youth will not be taken in bathrooms or sleeping areas.

## *Child Supervision*

Lord of Life follows the “two unrelated adult” rule, which means no adult shall be left alone with a youth, and requires a reasonable ration of adults to children in all situations requiring supervision of children by Lord of Life staff. The two adult rule lasts from the beginning of an event until the last youth has been picked up.

Every attempt shall be made to provide at least two adults for each group of youth during any activity. However, if limited resources allow for only one adult to supervise a group of children, Lord of Life will abide by the adult/youth ratios as defined in the Texas State day care licensing regulations, which is a 1:26 ratio. If alone with a group of youth, the door shall remain open.

This allowance of one adult supervising a group of youth at a youth event will only be allowed when the church is full and active (i.e. Sunday mornings) or in a public space (i.e. meeting at Starbucks), this is not allowed when the church is inactive (i.e. Sunday nights) or in a private space (i.e. your personal home). If the youth event only has one staff member or volunteer available and is held in a space where the church is inactive or private, the youth event will be canceled. Under no circumstance should an adult be alone with a youth.



In counseling sessions with minors, parental permission shall be obtained prior to a Lord of Life staff member meeting privately with a minor, or the two adult rule shall be used in that instance. Approved one-on-one counseling will be held in a room with internal windows and/or an open door. Prior permission may be granted by the parents to cover a particular time period (i.e. school year) for their child to receive counseling from a Lord of Life staff member.

### *Transportation*

Under no circumstance should a youth drive another youth on a sanctioned youth event.

The car is not an exception to the “no adult should be alone with a youth” rule. Under the unlikely event that a parent asks a staff member or volunteer to drive a youth home after a youth function, we can comply since the parent has consented to this activity. In this scenario the staff member or volunteer should text or call the youth director or one of the Pastors to share what is happening. Immediately after drop off, the staff member or volunteer will follow up with the youth director or one of the pastors to let them know the youth is no longer in their care. This scenario is only allowable under extreme situations and should not be the norm for our programming. If a parent asks for a “drop off” more than once per year, the youth director will work with the family to come up with a better system.

Adult drivers adhere to the guidelines set for the in the “LOL Youth Volunteer Qualifications” section.

### *Appropriate activities*

If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of an activity, questions and concerns should be brought before the Youth Director or a Pastor.

Spend time preparing and praying over any activity or lesson.

Movies played in their entirety must have a rating of G or PG, unless parents are told beforehand or at the discretion of the Youth Director and a Pastor. Clips from PG-13 or R movies can be shown for Bible Study, but should be carefully screened, and discussed with the Youth Director or Pastor.

## Incident / Emergency Procedures

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If a medical emergency arises, send an assistant to notify the Director of Youth Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member, remove the youth from the group, and make him/her as comfortable as possible. If a life-threatening emergency arises, have someone call 911. Administer first-aid as you are able (first-aid kits are located in the Sunday School cabinet in each KOK classroom and in the Lord of Life kitchen).

Below is a list of possible emergencies and actions that may be taken while waiting for help to arrive:

- Profuse Bleeding – Apply pressure to the wound until bleeding stops
- Choking – If the child is not moving air, perform the Heimlich maneuver



- Seizure – Protect the child from injury by removing all objects from around the child that he/she may bump into or knock over. Do not restrain or put any object in the child’s mouth.
- Broken bones – Support the affected limb/area and keep stable
- Fainting – Lay child flat with legs elevated approximately six inches
- Unconscious Child – Lay child flat. Check for breathing and pulse. Administer CPR if necessary and you know how, or find someone who does.

In all instances, complete an Incident Report and return to the Director of Youth Ministry.

### *Incident Report*

If an incident such as an injury (real or near) or sickness occurs in your group, let the Director of Youth Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member or committee leader on duty know. Complete an Incident Report and have parents sign and date it and list contact information so that follow-up may occur. Keep the incident report and return to the Director of Youth Ministry. A copy of the incident report may be given to the parent. Be sure to give the parent all information about what happened and any LOL contact information requested.

### *Severe Weather*

If severe weather such as hail, tornado, high winds, hurricane, rising waters, heavy rain, or lightning occurs:

- Move Youth indoors and into the center of the room, away from windows and doors
- Keep youth calm by maintaining order and a calm, reassuring demeanor.

### *Fire Evacuation*

When a fire or smoke emergency arises, volunteers should begin the appropriate intervention procedures:

- Maintain control and a calm, reassuring demeanor
- Remove youth from immediate danger
- Call 911, if necessary
- Contain fire by using a fire extinguishers and closing doors, if necessary
- Account for each youth in your group
- If fire alarm is sounding, follow the evacuation route that is posted in your classroom or move the children to the nearest building exit
- Use staircase, not the elevator
- Keep youth in a group at least 100 feet away from the building
- Perform frequent head-counts while waiting for danger to pass



## Communication Channels

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Open and honest communication is a cornerstone of successful ministry. As a member of the LOL Youth Team, you are encouraged to communicate your ideas and concerns to any member of the Lord of Life staff. If you have an idea for a great youth event or a way to improve on an existing program, please share it with us. Likewise, if you are experiencing a problem with another team member, a particular youth or an element of one of the youth programs, you are encouraged to communicate your concern with the Director of Youth Ministry.

### *Email*

LOL Youth team members use email as our primary means of communication. Youth team members will receive weekly emails containing information about upcoming events, lessons, schedules, and program information. Team members are encouraged to use email for communications that are not personal in nature, such as looking for a substitute for a particular Sunday. Because so much information is communicated via email, one's personal email address is generally made available all Youth team members. Personal email addresses will not be given out to non-team members, Lord of Life staff, or congregation members without explicit permission.

### *Website*

LOL Youth team members and the general public will find general information about Lord of Life sponsored events and programs for children on the Children's Ministry webpage <http://www.lordoflifeonline.org/index1e.htm>. LOL Youth team members should not rely on the webpage for specific information.

### *Phone / Face-to-Face*

Urgent or personal information is best communicated face-to-face or via phone. Because urgent information, such as an unplanned absence, is frequently communicated via phone, the personal phone numbers of LOL Youth team members will be made available to all LOL Youth team members. Phone numbers will not be given out to non-team members, Lord of Life staff, or congregation members without explicit permission.



## Receipt & Acknowledgement of LOL Youth Policy and Procedure Manual

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Please read the following statement, sign and date on the lines provided, and return to the Director of Youth Ministry.

*I have read and understand the policies and other information contained in the LOL Kids Policy and Procedure Manual. I agree, as a condition of my volunteering with LOL Kids, to comply with these policies and procedures as well as any new or revised policies or procedures.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name

