

Laurel Youth Fellowship Policies

Thank you so much for volunteering to be an adult ministry partner with Laurel Youth Fellowship (think chaperone with a more vested interest). The following information will help protect our students, protect you as a chaperone, enhance our students' youth group experience, and give you definitive direction as we grow in our relationships with the students we serve. I realize many of these policies may seem like common sense, but it is very important that everyone take a little time to review each one along with specific responsibilities and jobs within the ministry. After you have prayerfully and thoughtfully considered your role, please let me know which jobs over which you have interest in taking ownership.

Chaperones/Ministry Partners

Adults who are at least 19 years old and one year removed from high school graduation/ equivalency will be present at, whether at or away from the church property. There will be a minimum of two such adults present with a minimum ratio of one adult per ten youth under the age of 18. In the event a chaperone needs to withdrawal from an event, he/she shall offer at least three days advanced notification to the organizing adult and make a valid effort to find an approved substitute if necessary.

Mandatory Reporting

- All youth ministry staff and adult volunteers, serving in any capacity are subject to the Tennessee Code concerning mandatory reporters of abuse, and reports will be made as necessary and prescribed by the law (Tennessee Code 37-1-403)
- A mandatory reporter is defined as any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect. (Tennessee Code 37-1-403(a)(1)).
- Reports must be made as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours after obtaining knowledge or having suspicion. If the report is made verbally, it must be followed up with a written report to the same agency within 72 hours (exclusive of weekends and holidays). Verbal reports call Department of Child Services (DCS) in the county of the child's residence. Knox County DCS - 865-329-8879 or Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline - 877-237-0004.
- The report shall include, to the extent known by the reporter, the name, address, and age of the child, the name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, and the facts requiring the report and/or any other pertinent information (Tennessee Code 37-1-403(a)(3)(b)).

Adult Presence in Rooms

The ideal is to have two adults present in all areas where youth are present at all times. Any room in which there are minors must have its door open at all times (in the bunk houses this refers to doors between each room and bathroom doors, not exterior doors). If the room is in a secluded area (bunkhouses), there must be at least two adults present at all times; an open door does not suffice. Adults should maintain reasonable modesty at ALL times, including time spent in the bunkhouses, restrooms, and sleeping areas. Under no circumstance should a student enter the bunkhouse or restroom of the opposite gender; adults may only enter the opposite gender's bunkhouse or restroom in extreme circumstances (i.e. medical emergency).

Event Adult Presence

A youth ministry event shall be defined as any event held on the church campus (3457 Kingston Pike) or mandated by the youth minister, youth ministry employees or volunteers, or framed as such, AND not definitively differentiated as a non-youth group event (i.e. birthday parties,

sleepovers, etc.). All youth group events, as defined above, must be attended by at least two adult volunteers, in consistent gender ratio with students in attendance, AND also with at least one being 21 years of age or older. The minimum ratio shall be one adult per ten students under the age of 18.

Transportation Policy

The Laurel Church of Christ wishes all parents/guardians to know that the following is tracked and records are maintained for a period of one year after each church event: the whereabouts of all event participants once the established and start-time of an event is reached and until the event is concluded according to the prior-established time of conclusion. the Laurel Church of Christ takes seriously its role of care, custody, and control during this time, and parents/guardians are encouraged to review church policies and procedures as they pertain to youth events and activities.

The Laurel Church of Christ does not recommend, coordinate, arrange, or track the whereabouts of students or their mode of transportation while en route to and/or from any church-sponsored event (that is, before or after the event itself), realizing this is fully the responsibility of parents/guardians.

Regarding youth and their transportation to and from events at, beginning at, or sponsored by the Laurel Church of Christ, the Laurel Church of Christ assumes that parents/guardians know and have arranged in advance:

- 1) the whereabouts of the student(s) before arriving at the event;
- 2) the mode of transportation to be used to arrive at the event;
- 3) the person driving to the event or the mode of transportation the student will employ
- 4) the mode of transportation to be used to leave the event;
- 5) the person driving from the event; and
- 6) the location where the youth is supposed to be after the conclusion of the event.

Parents/guardians retain full responsibility for their youth's attitude towards their transportation arrangements. It is not the responsibility of the Laurel Church of Christ to enforce whether students do or do not comply with transportation arrangements assumed to have been made beforehand. If a student breaks such an arrangement, that is the family's matter, not the church's matter, though the church's ministry staff is available if the family wishes additional support.

If avoidable, adults should not be one-on-one with any students in vehicles, including those of the same gender. No adult shall transport a student of the opposite gender before, during, or after an event in the event that transportation results in a one-on-one situation. If forced to choose, adults should deliver students of the opposite gender of the adult to their destination first and students of the same gender last even in the event this procedure adds mileage and inconvenience to the trip (men drop of girls first, boys last; women drop of boys first, girls last).

Any time an adult is responsible for transportation of a student, he/she should text message or call the youth minister AND the parent just before the time of departure from the event locale and follow with a text to the youth minister (always) AND the parent (unless face-to-face contact is made) at the moment of arrival to the student's destination.

Under circumstances in which an event requires transportation from one location to another during the course of said event, students shall only be permitted to drive vehicles between locations in extenuating circumstances AND only when hand-written permission is obtained from parents or guardians of the driving students. Under no circumstances should one student be allowed to be transported by another student at such an event, even if the riding student was transported to the event by the riding student.

In the event one student wishes to be transported to and/or from an event by another student, the student receiving a ride should obtain hand-written permission from a parent or guardian, which should be submitted to the youth minister upon arrival to the event. In addition to a written note, parents/guardians should also contact the youth minister in advance via text message or phone conversation.

Cancellations

Cancellations due weather or other unforeseen circumstances shall be made no later than 90 minutes before the activity. Any cancellations are to be made according to the most effective and reasonable method of communication for the type of event in question, which may include: social media, text messaging applications, LYF website, email, direct text messaging, telephone, etc. If the event being cancelled is a small group event, group leaders are asked to directly notify their participants.

Liability Waivers and Behavior Forms

Students must have a parent/guardian permission and liability waiver, conduct agreement form, AND a medical permission to treat form to attend ALL off-site events and some on-site events. These permission slips will be collected prior to departing for an event and are checked for parent/guardian signatures and all other requested information. Verbal permission does not suffice. These forms may NOT be turned in after an event. Permission to treat forms will be kept until the applicable student graduates from high school and/or reaches the age of 18, at which time the forms may be destroyed. Waiver forms will be kept by the youth ministry staff for one year following the event, at which time they may be destroyed. The adult leader will respect the potentially sensitive nature of the data provided on the form.

Overnight Events

There will be a minimum of two adult chaperones 21 years or older present in all sleeping areas and of the same gender as the students in their area. In sleeping areas such as cabins with multiple rooms, it may be requested that doors remain ajar, at the discretion of staff and ministry leaders. Overnight chaperones will position themselves reasonably near the sleeping area's entrances and exits. Regardless of accommodations and room configurations, sleeping areas are always gender-specific and isolated from the other gender.

Student Conduct

- Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times. Appropriate behavior can be defined as, but is not limited to the following:
 - All proactive measures (adequate preparation, chaperone placement, environmental setup, etc.) will be taken to ensure that students will be sufficiently engaged in the event or activity so that the potential for misbehavior is minimized and the student experience is maximized.
 - Registration for an event may include a mandatory “Student Conduct Agreement” signed by each participant and/or parent(s)/guardian(s).
- “Conduct” and “behavior” include actions, words, and attire. “Appropriate” and “inappropriate” are determined by ministry staff and leaders. In the event of a disagreement, the decision of the staff will be followed. Elders may be consulted if necessary.
- The following apply as reflected by the nature of each particular event or activity, which may have its own rules or expectations communicated by ministry staff and/or leaders. In general, student participants will:
 - Project an image of Christian consideration, sensitivity, and respect to all people and property.
 - Follow group leaders’ stated expectations related to electronic devices, and when allowed to be used, use Christian sensitivity, consideration, and respect.
 - Project an image of Christian etiquette and modesty in their language, dress, and behavior.
 - Adhere to stated timelines, including curfews.
 - Be aware of noise levels, especially following lights out.
 - Report problems of any kind to a trusted adult.
 - Maintain the spirit of the event.
- Student participants will not:
 - Possess weapons or explosive materials of any kind or make threats of this nature.
 - Purchase, possess, smoke, or use tobacco products of any kind.
 - Purchase, possess, consume, or distribute alcohol or illegal drugs, as this will result in immediate removal from the event and notification of law enforcement in the event of illegal drug use or possession.
 - Engage in any form of exclusive intimate or physical activity (even if already in a dating relationship).
 - Engage in any form of verbal or sexual harassment or any inappropriate touching.
 - Act in any way that could result in injury and/or damage to property.
 - Purchase, download, possess, distribute, or view pornography in any form.
 - Visit or gather in bunkhouses or restrooms with/of the opposite gender.
- The following procedure will be used if a student engages in inappropriate behavior:
 - Youth ministry staff and/or leaders ask the student to behave appropriately.
 - If the inappropriate behavior continues, the student will be removed from the immediate area of the event or activity for a conversation with the staff member or ministry leader regarding the behavior with another staff member or ministry leader present.
 - If the behavior does not improve, a parent or guardian will be contacted to remove the student from the event or activity, and future participation in the youth ministry will be evaluated by ministry staff and/or elders according to the circumstance.
 - If a parent or guardian is not immediately able to come to the event site to remove the student, she or he will be sent home by the most convenient means and at the parent’s or guardian’s expense.
 - Depending on the severity of the misconduct, if the youth wishes to attend a future event, a) permission must be received by the elders, and b) the student’s parents must assure the staff and/or ministry leader(s) that the offense will not occur again, and the youth will be closely monitored through the course of the event. After successfully participating in several events without offense and with approval of the elders, the student will be welcome without special consideration. A Laurel Church of Christ incident report will be completed and kept on file. The focus of all discipline will be on correcting the behavior. In no way shall a student be intentionally made to feel embarrassed or ashamed.

Chaperone/Volunteer Conduct

- Adult Volunteers are to conduct themselves appropriately at all times. Adults will be held to a higher standard than students, as adults are expected to live as an example for younger Christians.
- All proactive measures (adequate preparation, background checks, personal references, etc.) will be taken to ensure that students will be sufficiently engaged in the event or activity so that the potential for misbehavior is minimized and the student experience is maximized.
- Preparation for an event may include a mandatory “Adult Conduct Agreement” signed by each adult volunteer.
- “Conduct” and “behavior” include actions, words, and attire. “Appropriate” and “inappropriate” are determined by ministry staff and leaders. In the event of a disagreement, the decision of the staff will be followed. Elders may be consulted if necessary.
- Whenever two individuals in a dating or marital relationship attend an event together, they are expected (and may be asked) to not engage in exclusive or intimate activity during the event.
- The following apply as reflected by the nature of each particular event or activity, which may have its own rules or expectations communicated by ministry staff and/or leaders. In general, adult volunteers will:
 - Project an image of Christian consideration, sensitivity, and respect to all people and property.
 - Project an image of Christian etiquette and modesty in their language, dress, and behavior.
 - Support the ministry goals of staff and ministry leaders and enthusiastically follow their direction (See 10 Weekly Expectations for a LYF Gathering)
 - Report problems ministry leaders as needed.
 - Maintain the spirit of the event.
- Adult volunteers will not:
 - Be alone with minors, always following the two-adult rule.
 - Engage in excessive familiarity, inappropriate language, or any situation or conduct that exploits or could give the appearance of exploiting another.
 - Engage in any form of exclusive intimate or sexual activity (even if already in a dating or marriage relationship).
 - Possess weapons or explosive materials of any kind or make threats of this nature.
 - Purchase or distribute tobacco products, alcohol, or illegal drugs of any kind to minors, and will not possess or use tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs during any event, as this will result in immediate removal from the event and notification of law enforcement in the event of illegal drug use or possession or contributing the delinquency of minors.
 - Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, demean, or degrade minors or other adults.
 - Act in any way that could result in injury and/or damage to property.
 - Engage in any form of abusive behavior.
 - Pose any known health risk to others.
- The following procedure will be used if a volunteer engages in inappropriate behavior:
 - Ministry staff will ask the volunteer to behave appropriately.
 - If the inappropriate behavior continues, staff will remove the volunteer from the immediate area of the event or activity for a conversation regarding the behavior and with another adult present.
 - If the behavior does not improve, the volunteer will be asked to leave the event or activity, and future participation will be evaluated by staff and elders according to the circumstances.
 - If the volunteer does not have transportation available to leave the event site, she or he will be sent home by the most convenient means and at his or her own expense.
 - Depending on the severity of the misconduct, the adult will no longer be eligible to take part in youth events for at least one year and not until 1) consulting with the elders and b) satisfactorily demonstrating, through observable behavior and two personal references that she or he will not engage in inappropriate behavior at youth events or among students at non-youth events. A second offense will result in a permanent expulsion from all youth events (revocable only by the elders). The focus of discipline is correcting the behavior.

Use of Printed, Audio and Video, and Web Materials

Youth will be exposed to only those words and images that support Christian values and that do not detract from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Similarly, youth will not be exposed to media that is rated at a level above their current age level. For our purposes this means:

- NC-17 = Nobody under 17 will view this.
- R = Nobody under 17 will view this without a parent or adult guardian.
- PG-13 = Nobody under 13 will view this without a parent or designated adult.
- PG = Acceptable for all youth events and activities.
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Bible class teachers and youth event speakers may supplement their curriculum with outside sources, as long as those sources support the above-stated policy. Use of media in place of a Bible instruction time must have the express permission of the youth minister. In case of a disagreement over the use of media, the elders may be contacted for consultation. If a PG-13 video is desired to be shown to youth 12 and under, parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to accompany their child(ren). If this is not possible, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may give written permission authorizing leader(s) to show the video to their child(ren). Parent or adult guardians must accompany students below the age of 17 if an R-rated video is desired; written permission does not suffice. Unrated media is at the ministry staff's discretion, following Gospel values and the ministry's intent. Video, photographic, artistic, print, or musical material depicting sexual activity, with strong foul language, or with excessive violence, or any visual media with nudity, will not be used.

Food Management

Food where students are present is appropriate for the event, for the attendees, and for the venue. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to inform the appropriate staff person(s) and ministry leader(s) of their children's food allergies. In the absence of such notification, it is assumed that no food allergy is present and that all foods are acceptable. If a student possesses an allergy such that the close proximity of an epi-pen (or similar) is advised, parents will ensure a) the youth carry such at all times and b) ministry leaders are aware of this need. Affected ministry leaders will be advised on the use of epi-pens and similar actions. Staff and ministry leaders ensure that proper steps are taken to avoid any potential health risks.

Bible classes and weekly activities may include "simple snacks" (cookies, muffins, chips, etc.). Clean-up is the responsibility of the classroom teacher or event organizer.

Ministry leaders will take notice of and follow potential allergen-limitation signage and/or policies. Staff and ministry leaders are responsible for storage and/or disposal of food, including leftovers. Trash liners with food placed in them should be placed in the dumpster and the liners should be replaced. Clean-up of food preparation and service items as well as reasonable clean-up of facility surfaces is the responsibility of staff and ministry leaders directly connected to the event.

Offenses Occurring Outside Laurel Church of Christ Youth Events

Any volunteer who is known to have acted contrary to certain policies contained herein, though not as part of a LYF youth event or activity, may be subject to the same consequences as those committed within a LYF youth event or activity. This applies to policies affecting the safety and well-being of students and other adults as well as the legal, material, and financial liabilities of the church, eldership, ministry staff, and event venues. Affected policies include but are not limited to:

- Mandatory Reporting, Chaperone/Volunteer Conduct, Transportation, Conduct, Drug Use, Alcohol Abuse, Violence or Weapons Use or Threat, Sex Contact, Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harassment, Use of Printed, Audio and Video, and Web Materials.

Determinations of action are made pastorally and in consultation with the elders, the ministry staff, and/or the Parent Advisory Committee.