



Southside Baptist Church Ministry Policies

Student Safety

A Supplement to Children & Students
Policies

Dear Student Ministry Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Southside Baptist Church!

At Southside Baptist Church, we take our responsibility to care for students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for staff members and volunteers serving in Student Ministry to junior high and high school students. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students, protecting students, you, and the mission of Southside Baptist Church.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Southside Baptist Church Leadership

Southside Baptist Church

Safety Policies & Procedures for Student Ministry (Junior and Senior High Students)

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Overview of Southside Baptist Church Safety System

Because we care for students and desire to protect them, Southside Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Southside Baptist Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of Southside Baptist Church Leadership. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a student for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Southside Baptist Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Southside Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Southside Baptist Church’s Screening Process, which includes:

- An Employment Application (employees only)
 - A Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
 - A face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
 - References to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- *A volunteer must attend Southside Baptist Church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions interacting with children or students.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

Southside Baptist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children’s or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Student Safety Policy

DESIGNATIONS

An **Immediate Supervisor** is the person a staff member or volunteer reports directly to.

The **Overseeing Minister** is the called and recognized minister of the church (not a ministry director) tasked with overseeing a specific ministry area (ex: a Children's Minister, Student Minister, Family Minister, Associate or Lead Pastor, etc.).

A **Director** is a person other than a called and recognized minister of the church who oversees a specific ministry area (ex: a children's director, student director, family director, etc.).

The **Designated Overseers** are a specially called and recognized group of the church. An Overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, not a recent convert, and well thought of by outsiders.¹ At a minimum, this group will be comprised of a plurality of male, called and recognized ministers of the church.

The **Executive/Lead Pastor** designation refers to the Executive Pastor first. In the absence of an Executive Pastor, this designation refers to the Lead Pastor.

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Southside Baptist Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Southside Baptist Church to act in the best interest of students in every program.

In the event that any staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behavior (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report these observations to his or her immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister, or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Southside Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for students and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a student for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

¹ See 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV).

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Southside Baptist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Southside Baptist Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Student Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Executive/Lead Pastor and the Designated Overseers.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Overseeing Minister, or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Student Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Southside Baptist Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Southside Baptist Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children or students at Southside Baptist Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

According to Alabama Law, any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or who observes any child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse shall be required to report orally, either by telephone or direct communication, immediately followed by a written report, to DHR, law enforcement, or the District Attorney.²

It is the policy of Southside Baptist Church that ALL suspicions or allegations of abuse, regardless of state law requirements, should be reported.

² The Department of Human Resources provides forms: Written Report of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (DHR-FCS-1593) for making reports of suspected child abuse and/or neglect (CAN). Individuals considered Mandatory Reporters are required to make written reports and should use CAN forms. Forms are available through the county and state offices of the Department of Human Resources. (This form is available at the Alabama Department of Human Resources, (334) 242-9500 or also available for completion and www.dhr.alabama.gov).

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

Southside Baptist Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Southside Baptist Church Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children and students, Southside Baptist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Southside Baptist Church's Children's and Student Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Executive/Lead Pastor
2. Overseeing Minister,
3. Children/Student/Family Director(s), and/or
4. Any appointee of the Designated Overseers.

MEETINGS

The Executive/Lead Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Southside Baptist Church policies and procedures related to student safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Student Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to Southside Baptist Church Designated Overseers.

Student Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with students.

1. **Each supervisor** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly.
2. **The Overseeing Minister** conducts written performance evaluations every six months for individuals in paid staff positions.
3. **The Overseeing Minister** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
4. **Executive/Lead Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Student Ministry program at least once each quarter.
5. **Executive/Lead Pastor** meets with Overseeing Minister at least once monthly to discuss Student Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
6. **The Designated Overseers** meet with the Overseeing Minister once each year to discuss Student Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
7. **The Overseeing Minister** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs that occur weekly.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Overseeing Minister will be responsible for ensuring that the Student Ministry area is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and students in student classrooms or meetings.

No student will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during Student Ministry programs or meetings. Student Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual student in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single student, that staff member or volunteer will take the student to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a student desires additional conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present, or into a public space.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Any two students together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO

Southside Baptist Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Student Ministry activities and programs:

At least two screened adults must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

For groups larger than 30 students, there will be at least 3 staff members or volunteers supervising.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify supervisory staff responsible for the program or event. The responsible supervisory staff member will make diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

DISCIPLINE

It is the policy of Southside Baptist Church that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or students.

No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction or inappropriate behaviors by students. If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff members will verbally redirect students involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Overseeing Minister.

INTOXICANTS

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any church facility, while traveling with students, or while working with or supervising students.

NUDITY

Staff and volunteers in Southside Baptist Church's student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will communicate a plan to the Overseeing Minister concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Southside Baptist Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from the Student Minister.

If a closed-door meeting must occur, the student staff member must inform another staff member BEFORE the meeting occurs, and the door remains unlocked.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for students. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of students:

1. Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Southside Baptist Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Southside Baptist Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents whose student is participating in Southside Baptist Church's Student Ministry activities and programs will be contacted if their child becomes severely ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with Student Ministry programs will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Southside Baptist Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, Southside Baptist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Student Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Student Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and students are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the student, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or student staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.

5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff or volunteers in the Student Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Student staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Overseeing Minister or the Executive/Lead Pastor.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time Student ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will occur in group settings, and will convey the church's views on these topics.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to any student) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of students, including those in electronic form.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The 2-adult rule must be followed; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer.
2. All adult leaders must have previously completed the Church's screening and training process.
3. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Overseeing Minister prior to the activity.
4. As long as any students are awake, one trip leader must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
5. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.

6. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
7. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
8. Staff members and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
9. Whenever possible, at least one staff member or volunteer will sleep in the same room (but not same bed) as students, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
10. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

TOBACCO

Southside Baptist Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in Church facilities, while in the presence of students or their parents, and during Church activities or programs. Southside Baptist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. Southside Baptist Church staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of students.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to students in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of students.

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Southside Baptist Church's Ministry Policies for Student Safety and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Southside Baptist Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Southside Baptist Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between Southside Baptist Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of Southside Baptist Church Ministry policies and procedures manual for Student Safety.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to remain attached to Southside Baptist Church Ministry Policies for Student Safety.]

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Southside Baptist Church's Ministry Policies for Student Safety and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Southside Baptist Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Southside Baptist Church.

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Date: _____

[This page is to be signed, detached and delivered to Executive/Lead Pastor.]