



# CONDUCT WITH MINORS POLICY

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The following guidelines apply to all adults and minors who are serving in any ministry capacity in the presence of children and youth at GateWay City Church and Kids Clubs. The purpose of this policy is to not only protect the children and youth that we serve from potential abuse, but also to protect our adult and youth workers from false accusations.

For purposes of this policy the term “leader” will be used to identify church staff, adult volunteers, parent helpers, and approved youth assistants from all GateWay ministries.

## **2-Adult Rule**

An individual adult leader may only be alone with an individual minor in locations where the door is open, where there is a clear sight-line into the area, and there is regular foot-traffic.

1. There must never be a situation where one adult leader and one minor are alone together in a closed or isolated location, regardless of the short duration of time, the genders of the adult leader and minor, the close relationship of the adult leader and minor, the convenience sacrificed, the confidentiality compromised, or the unlikelihood of anything happening in the situation.

Examples of one-on-one situations to avoid are:

- Classrooms, meeting rooms, kitchens, and storage closets, even with the door open
- Most offices (see exception below)
- Restrooms
- Isolated hallways
- Isolated outdoor perimeter areas of the campus
- Vehicles
- Hiking trails and other recreation areas where there is not a clear sight-line and regular foot-traffic
- Personal homes



Examples of acceptable one-on-one situations are:

- Church lobby areas and main corridor
  - Café Lift
  - Sanctuary when the doors are open
  - Offices off the lobby that have large windows, with the blinds fully open
  - Outside the facility on the Eden Park side
2. The optimum and desired situation is to have at least two adult leaders and two minors in any class, activity, ministry, counseling, or casual situation.
  3. If an adult leader must be alone in a class, activity, ministry, counseling, or casual situation, then at least two minors must be present the entire time.
  4. If a minor must be alone in a class, activity, ministry, counseling, or casual situation, then at least two adult leaders must be present the entire time. If this cannot be arranged then the class, activity, ministry, counseling, or casual situation cannot be held or continued.

### **Off-Campus Meetings**

1. When meeting with minors at off-campus locations it is always desirable to meet in groups.
2. In the case of an organized group activity for minors which is sponsored by a GateWay ministry, a “Parental Release of Liability” form must be signed and submitted by the parent of each participating minor.
3. One-on-one off-campus meetings with minors in junior high and younger are not permitted.
4. It is acceptable for Youth Staff members to meet one-on-one with high school students at off-site locations such as coffee shops or restaurants under the following guidelines:
  - Meetings may only take place between members of the same gender
  - The minor’s parent must be aware and give verbal or written permission prior to the meeting. They must also be informed of the purpose of the meeting, the location of the meeting, and the approximate starting and ending times.



- The Youth Pastor must be aware and give permission prior to the meeting. He must also be informed of the purpose of the meeting, the location of the meeting, and the approximate starting and ending times. If the Youth Pastor is meeting one-on-one with a student he must provide the same information to a supervising pastor.
- The leader and minor must arrange to arrive and depart from the agreed upon meeting location using separate modes of transportation.
- The leader and minor must be in an open location at all times, such as patio seating or a table in the middle of the room, where there is an abundance of visibility and foot-traffic.

### **Restroom Use**

1. A leader should not enter a restroom at GateWay's facilities that is occupied solely by a minor. This guideline also applies when the leader is acting as a representative of GateWay City Church at an off-campus location. The leader must wait outside the restroom until the minor has exited, or until other adults or minors have entered.
2. If a leader is the sole occupant of a restroom either on or off campus and an individual minor enters, the leader should exit the restroom as soon as is reasonably possible.

### **Restroom Assistance**

This policy applies to all situations in which parents have temporarily placed their minor into our care.

1. Leaders may not change a child's diaper unless it is their own child. The parent is to be located and summoned to change their infant or young toddler's diaper.
2. Toddlers up through 3 years of age most often need assistance as they are in the process of potty training. The parent is to be located and summoned to handle the situation when their infant or young toddler is in need of the restroom.
3. Children 4 years of age through 5<sup>th</sup> grade must be accompanied to the restroom by at least one adult (age 18+), and are not allowed to journey to the restroom unchaperoned. The following guidelines apply:
  - If there is only one adult escort there must be at least two children when going to the restroom. One adult with one child is unacceptable. The optimum situation is a minimum of two adults and two children



- The accompanying adult should escort the children to the restroom, go in first to check that no one is in the restroom, and then allow the children to enter by themselves. The adult may not go in with the children but should always wait in the hall outside with the restroom door propped open. The accompanying adult should redirect others who wish to enter to an alternate restroom.
  - Women may chaperone girls or boys to the restroom. Men are allowed to chaperone boys only and are not permitted to take girls into restrooms.
4. Youth in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades may journey to the restroom un-chaperoned with the permission of a Youth Staff member.

### **Electronic Communication**

1. Electronic communication directly with minors in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger is not permitted. Any communication must be handled through the parent.
2. It is acceptable for the Youth Pastor and those whom he delegates to communicate electronically with junior high and high school students via phone calls, text messaging, instant messaging, Facebook, and emails for obvious, specific, and necessary Youth Ministry purposes only.
3. Youth Staff members may not communicate electronically with minors without the Youth Pastor's permission.
4. Electronic communication with minors for personal or counseling purposes is not allowed.

### **Attitude and Verbal Communication**

1. Leaders must treat all minors with respect and consideration as children of God, and respect them equally without regard to sex, race, culture, religion, or disabilities.
2. Leaders must communicate in wholesome and pure language, avoiding the use of profanity, inappropriate jokes or innuendo, or intimate personal details.
3. Leaders must communicate an attitude of maturity, patience, gentleness, and composure at all times, creating an emotionally safe environment and exhibiting a positive role model for the minors in their care.



4. Leaders must have realistic and age-appropriate expectations for minors, and establish guidelines and an environment where discipline is minimal and minors are most likely to succeed. Leaders must not allow fear or frustration to lead to anger, threats, humiliation, degradation, shaming, or withholding love towards a minor.
5. Leaders must use positive guidance techniques such as encouragement, positive reinforcement, and redirection, and avoid negative motivators such as criticism, comparison, and unhealthy competition.

### **Displays of Affection**

1. Leaders should not initiate front-to-front, full-body hugs (“bear hugs”) with a minor, and should take appropriate action to discreetly and respectfully avoid or remove themselves from such a hug initiated by a minor.
2. An appropriate hug with a minor would be side-to-side, with the hand placed on their upper back or shoulder.
3. A leader should not seat a minor on their lap, with the exception of a female leader with an infant or toddler. If a minor jumps into a leaders lap, the leader should discreetly and respectfully stand up, removing the lap to sit on.
4. Affectionate play such as tickling, rough-housing, ice down the shirt, etc. should be avoided because of the potential for a misplaced hand or a misunderstood action.
5. Any touching which obviously makes a minor feel uncomfortable, regardless of the innocence or intent, must be immediately discontinued.
6. Leaders should refrain from public displays of affection in the presence of minors, even though the activity may be appropriate in other settings.

### **Dating**

Leaders are not allowed to date or to be involved in any type of emotional or physical relationship with a minor in our programs.



## **Corporal Punishment**

Leaders may not administer Corporal punishment (spanking) or any other form of physical discipline or punishment such as striking, shaking, slapping, etc. Biblical corporal punishment administered appropriately in love is the role and responsibility of the parent.

## **Hazing & Practical Jokes**

1. Hazing is not allowed. Hazing is defined as any task or 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
2. Practical jokes towards minors should be avoided because of their potential for emotional hurt to a sensitive individual.

## **Gambling, Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Controversial Behavior**

An individual may consider certain behaviors such as gambling or alcohol or tobacco use as being acceptable before the Lord within their private life. But these behaviors can be controversial and potentially damaging within the church setting. The Scriptures mandate that as leaders we are to live a life beyond reproach, avoid the appearance of evil, and not allow our personal freedoms to stumble another. We must refrain from directly or indirectly endorsing these behaviors through our actions and words. As examples and shepherds to the flock, leaders must not:

1. Encourage or allow gambling, the use of alcohol or tobacco, or other potentially controversial behaviors at any GateWay ministry or event
2. Personally participate in gambling, the use of alcohol or tobacco, or other potentially controversial behaviors in any public setting where they might be observed or recognized as a GateWay leader
3. Communicate with minors about their own participation in gambling, their use of alcohol or tobacco, or other potentially controversial behaviors even in response to inquiries by a minor

If a minor has a legitimate need or desire to discuss these issues they should be directed to the overseeing pastor of the ministry for further instruction.

