

Safe Church Policies for Adults Working with Youth

Neighborhood Alliance Church

Neighborhood Alliance Church desires to provide a safe, loving environment where youth are protected and shepherded well. The following guidelines and procedures are in place to assist in providing a safe, loving environment.

For the purpose of this document:

1. A “student” is anyone who is under the age of eighteen (18) or is still attending high school and who attends any youth ministry activity at Neighborhood Alliance Church.
2. A “worker” is anyone who has been asked to lead or volunteer for a youth ministry activity at Neighborhood Alliance Church.
3. A ministry coordinator refers to the person(s) Neighborhood Alliance Church has appointed to lead the student ministry.

Worker Qualifications

Character Qualifications:

1. **Available** to invest in students’ lives and in at least one weekly ministry program (3-5 hrs/wk)
2. **Responsive** to God’s work in your heart; to growing as a person; to needs of others; to authority.
3. **Faithful**, growing in your relationship with God; committed to working as a team.

Ministry Commitment:

1. Care for students through consistent relationships with students (inside & outside church).
2. Meet monthly as a ministry team.
3. Serve the ministry by using your spiritual gifts.
4. Be accountable to the youth ministry team & to church leadership.

Required Screening:

1. **Complete a background check.** For workers under the age of 25, checks must be updated every two years. For workers over the age of 25, checks must be updated every 5 years. NAC will keep it on file for the duration of the worker’s involvement with children’s ministry.
2. **Read & be familiar with NAC’s Policies For Adults Working With Youth and sign the Volunteer Worker Questionnaire** (at the back of this packet) every two years. This must be submitted to and kept on file at NAC.

3. **Complete the MinistrySafe training every two years.** This training is very helpful & informative—and is also required by our insurance. You'll receive a link or on-site opportunity for you to complete the training when you return the questionnaire at the back of this packet.
4. **Attend NAC for at least 6 months prior to taking a volunteer position.**

Workers who are volunteering for a one-time or short-term (one week or less) ministry opportunity may be exempted from the 6-month attendance requirement when these requirements are met:

- 1) Background check
- 2) Two references are called, including one outside NAC's membership.

References should be checked by either the ministry area leader or a staff person they designate and be completed before the volunteer is approved to serve.

Event Policy

1. All youth ministry events are to function with an "open door" policy. This means parents, staff, elders and church members have a right to observe any youth activity.
2. All youth ministry overnight events require a minimum of two workers. If the students are both male and female the workers must be both male and female. If these conditions are not met, the activity must be cancelled for the gender who has no adult supervisor.
3. A 5 to 1 ratio of students to adults should be used in supervising any official group activity.
4. There should be a minimum of two adults in any room where students are present during a ministry event. At least one of the adults should be 21 years of age or older. Deviation from the two-adult rule is only permitted with specific approval from the ministry coordinator after attempts have been made to find a suitable adult. In this case, the worker must keep an accurate record of who attended the event and submit it to the ministry coordinator within 48 hours after the event.
5. Should it become necessary for only one adult to be in a room with a student, the room must include windows so that the in-room activity is in plain view. If the room does not contain windows that provide a clear view of the room, the door must remain open at all times.
6. Males and females (both students and workers) must sleep in separate rooms and have separate access to bathroom facilities.

Interaction with Students Policy

“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”—1 Thessalonians 2:8

Neighborhood highly values interaction between adults and students as a biblical model of making disciples through significant, Jesus-centered relationships. The spirit of NAC’s policy on interaction with students is to encourage life-changing relationships that are above reproach, with the intent of disciplemaking, not just being a “grown-up buddy.”

These policies are designed to protect both minors and workers as we strive to uphold this core value:

1. Before a worker gives a student a ride in their car to or from a ministry event, the student’s parent or legal guardian must be notified. If a parent cannot be communicated with, the worker should notify the ministry coordinator as an alternative.
2. No worker may ride in a car alone with a student of the opposite gender under any circumstances, even if requested or authorized by the parents. Either a third person must ride in the car or alternate transportation arrangements must be made.
3. Dating or romantic relationships of any kind between a worker and a student is prohibited.
4. If a worker develops romantic or sexual attraction for a student, it should be brought up and discussed with the ministry coordinator immediately.
5. Sexual gestures, conversations or innuendos between a worker and a student must be reported to the ministry coordinator immediately. Any suspicions of inappropriate interaction between an adult and a student should be immediately addressed and investigated.
6. Whenever possible, private communication between a worker and a student of the opposite gender outside of youth ministry activities should be made only with specific intent for furthering the ministry of disciplemaking, not just for socializing. Communication as stated here includes (but isn’t limited to) emails, text messages, phone conversations and private messages on social media. A good litmus test is that both parties involved should be willing and able to easily explain the purpose of the conversation to others and feel comfortable sharing the nature of it with parents, adult leaders and peers.

Private communication that deviates from this guideline must be reported to the ministry coordinator.

7. If it is necessary to meet in-person privately with a student of the opposite gender, workers must notify a parent and the ministry coordinator of the place you will be talking,

and with whom you will be talking. Any such talking should happen in a public place, (i.e. a coffee shop, the youth room, a room with an open door) where you can talk privately but are still in plain view of others. Guard yourself against seclusion. In discussions of a sensitive nature, make every attempt to have female workers talk with female students and male workers talk with male students.

8. Students may raise issues of abuse, alcoholism and neglect. Workers need to be aware of these issues and be ready to refer the student to qualified professionals. Workers also need to be sure that we are following the legal guidelines the State of Florida has for reporting instances of abuse, neglect or any criminal actions.

Technology & Social Media Policy

1. Youth workers will, at times, ask students to put away or limit the use of their devices during ministry times, activities and trips together. We ask that parents, students and youth workers all honor these requests to make the most of our opportunities to connect with each other and with God.
2. It is never acceptable to view, listen to, play and/or share digital media that is pornographic, vulgar, violent or otherwise inappropriate during ministry activities. Students should not watch movies on their devices unless it's approved by the youth workers, and this should be in exceptional situations.
3. When we're together, students will be asked to NOT use earphones when it isolates them from the community.
4. Adults should not post media of students on personal social media without knowledge and permission of students. Adults should not post media of students on NAC social media or the NAC web site without students' knowledge and permission, unless a parent or guardian has opted-in for us to share content on NAC's online presence. This can be an annual opt-in.

Dress Code Policy (Workers and Students)

1. If what you're wearing draws attention away from who you are as a person or your personality, you probably shouldn't wear it.
2. Clothing should fit appropriately—not too tight or so loose that it's falling off. Clothing should cover sufficiently to conceal undergarments (i.e. guys' pants not falling down and showing boxers, girls' tops not revealing cleavage).
3. When participating in water events locally, you may wear a swimsuit that appropriately covers your body:
 - Tankinis and one-piece suits are acceptable.
 - If your suit covers less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of your torso, it's too small.
 - If your suit is held together by strings, it's too small.
 - Guys' swim shorts should fully cover them from waist-down (no underwear showing).

- Students whose suits do not meet these requirements should be asked to wear a t-shirt and/or shorts that provide appropriate coverage.
4. Out-of-state trips and activities partnering with other churches may require more conservative dress in order to honor the culture in which we're participating.
 5. Workers are responsible for clearly communicating this policy to students in love so students have every opportunity to honor it.
 6. This policy is intended as a *guideline*. Students not meeting this dress code policy should be shown grace and gently guided to appropriate dress one-on-one, not singled out or embarrassed—especially given that some students will not initially be aware of the policy or even understand its importance. Whenever possible, a worker of the same gender should address dress code concerns.

Expectations for Students' Relationships

1. A youth ministry can provide a healthy, safe place for students to explore opposite gender relationships. NAC acknowledges that students may develop romantic relationships with one another, and workers should be committed to helping students grow in their relational maturity and honor God and their parents in their decisions regarding relationships.
2. At the same time, all NAC's ministry events serve the purpose of relational disciplinemaking, not dating, and students should keep that focus at the forefront. It's not acceptable for students with romantic interest to separate themselves from the rest of the group or make their romantic interest a point of distraction or attention during ministry activities.
3. A male and female student should never be alone together at a ministry event out of eyeshot or earshot of others.
4. Public displays of affection that are romantic (holding hands, kissing, lingering touches) between students during ministry events is never acceptable.
5. Workers are responsible for clearly communicating these expectations to students so they have every opportunity to honor them well.
6. When students are not honoring these policies, workers should graciously address the concern with the student(s) to encourage students toward appropriate behavior. Students should never be singled out or embarrassed publicly.

Guidelines for Reporting

1. **WHEN TO REPORT:** If there is any doubt as to whether or not to report an incident or suspicion, it should be reported. Florida Statutes states that anyone who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect is required to report that abuse or neglect. Any person participating “in good faith” in the making of a report shall be immune from any liability and the reporter’s name shall not be released to anyone other than Florida Protection Services employees or the state attorney without written consent of the person reporting. The only exception to reporting is privileged communication between clergy and counselee or attorney/client. For reasons of liability and integrity, the report should be made within 48 hours of any instance of child abuse.
2. **HOW TO REPORT:** Anyone observing any indicators or symptoms of abuse of a child should report it to their immediate supervisor. The report should be documented in writing, and a copy kept in a permanent, secure file. If anonymity is strongly desired, have a third party witness the report for later confirmation, if that should become necessary.

After determining an incident has occurred, or there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, the supervisor or church elder shall submit the report to:

1. Florida Protection Services at 1-800-962-2873
2. The Southeastern District office of The Christian and Missionary Alliance
3. The church’s insurance company as deemed appropriate.
4. The church’s attorney as deemed appropriate.

For the sake of the victim(s) and the alleged perpetrator, until formal charges are brought, all allegations, reports to the authorities, and any ongoing investigations should be held in the strictest confidence.

3. **HOW TO RESPOND TO THE MEDIA:** A brief policy statement should be prepared indicating the church has adopted policies and guidelines in an attempt to protect all young children and youth, stating that there is concern over the allegations and the church has taken internal action and has notified the appropriate agencies and will be cooperating with them. Advice from the church’s attorney should be sought before making comments to the media. A designated individual should handle all media inquiries. Individuals should be instructed that **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should any other staff or volunteer respond to the media. No additional information is to be volunteered.

Church Discipline

If found that child abuse has taken place by a worker, paid or volunteer, of an Alliance church, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17. When discipline becomes necessary under the authority of the District, the District will follow the procedures under “Uniform Policy on Discipline and Appeal” as found in the Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. The church should ask the Child Protection Agency if it could assist in helping the hurting family. The church should attempt to maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with the victim and their family. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals or families for receiving professional counseling. The church should also attempt to maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change, and look to Christ for help.

Volunteer Worker Questionnaire
- CONFIDENTIAL -

Please complete this questionnaire, along with the background check form, and return to the student ministry coordinator. Keep pages 1-6 for your own reference in working with students.

Please answer each of the following questions. Your response will be kept fully confidential.

1. How long have you been attending NAC? Have you worked with children or youth before? Explain.

2. As a volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with youth?
 YES NO

3. Have you ever been accused or convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime (other than minor traffic violations)? YES NO
If yes, please explain:

4. I have received a copy of the *Policies For Adults Working With Youth*. YES NO

5. I have carefully read the *Policies For Adults Working With Youth* and I agree to abide by it. YES NO Date Read: _____

6. Have you personally trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and are you committed to having the character of Jesus live through you? YES NO

Signature

Date

Print name

Phone

Email

Age/Grade/School (if applicable)

Parent's Signature (if applicable)

References

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship: _____

Request for Criminal Records Check & Authorization

I hereby request and authorize the release of any information which pertains to any record of arrests or convictions contained in law enforcement files, or in any file maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release local, state and national law enforcement agencies from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____ Social Security No.: _____

Print Maiden Name if Applicable: _____

Print all Aliases: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____
(city) (state)

Email for online training: _____