



Memorial Presbyterian Student Ministry

Discipline Policy

(Adopted—August 2009)

While trying to create fun, relevant, and exciting activities for students, we must also create a safe environment where students can grow and exercise their faith. Therefore, we have created policies to deal with problems in the following areas. These policies are not meant to curb the enjoyment or creativity of students or workers but are provided to let everyone know what behavior is expected. We expect everyone to learn, remember, and abide by the policies, but we do not anticipate having to use the disciplinary actions outlined (though we are prepared to do so). We have found that when students know what is expected of them, we have very few problems and are able to create the warm and nurturing environment described above.

1. Disruptions during meetings

We are able to have a good time, joke, and have fun in our meetings. Some students, however, occasionally take it too far and disrupt our meetings, causing other students to be distracted from the Bible teaching. In these cases, we follow these progressive disciplinary steps:

- Disruptive students will be separated from their friends. Our workers are to move the disruptive students to another seat, away from their friends.
- After being separated on any given week, if the student continues with the negative behavior, the student will be asked to leave the meeting and an adult worker will phone the parents/guardians to pick up the student early.
- If, when the student returns the next time, he or she continues the disruptive pattern, the student will be given a cooling off period away from youth ministry activities for two weeks.
- If, the student causes further disruption when returning from a cooling off period, he or she will be suspended indefinitely.

2. Students who are under the influence of or in possession of illegal drugs or alcohol or students possessing weapons or tobacco

- If a student comes to any youth ministry class or activity and is noticeably under the influence of drugs or alcohol or b.) has possession of illegal drugs, alcohol or weapons, we will immediately report the incident to the student's parents, send the student home, and enforce a cooling off period from all youth ministry activities for two to four weeks depending on the severity of the situation. Such incidents will also be reported to the church leadership. If recommended by the church leadership and/or required by law, the police and/or other authorities will also be contacted. Professional counseling will be recommended.
- If a student uses or is in possession of tobacco products the tobacco will be taken away and destroyed. The student's parents will also be notified.

3. Leaving the supervisory presence of the youth ministry staff (i.e. leaving the youth center, leaving the church, leaving the group during trips, etc.)

Sometimes students try to leave the supervisory presence of adult workers so they can avoid group activities, talk on a cell phone, smoke, couple off, or leave the premises. We cannot allow this behavior because parents trust us to be responsible custodians of their children, and we can't be responsible when students have left our presence.

- Therefore, students are not permitted to leave the youth center during our meetings. Those who leave the youth center or the church premises will face the following progression of disciplinary steps:
 - If a student leaves the youth center (but not the church premises):

- On the first offense, the student's parents will be notified.
- If there is a second offence, the student will be given a cooling off period from youth activities for two weeks.
- If there is a third offence, the student will be suspended indefinitely.
- Students may leave the premises before the end of classes and activities **only** if the youth ministry staff has been notified by the parents or guardians in person or by phone. If a student leaves the premises without permission:
 - On the first offence, the parents will be notified and the student will be given a cooling off period from youth ministry activities for two weeks.
 - If there is a second offence, the student will be suspended indefinitely.
- If a student leaves the group during a trip, disciplinary action will be taken during the trip, and depending on the severity of the situation, a student may be given a cooling off period from youth activities and/or banned from one or more future trips. Parents may be asked to pick up the student from the trip wherever the group may be.
 - Students also may not leave a trip or activity early with a person other than a parent or guardian unless the youth ministry staff has been notified in advance by the parents or guardians in person or by phone.

4. Divisiveness and arguing

Arguing and contention is typical with teenagers and a certain amount is tolerated. We do not tolerate arguing and contention that begins to affect the overall unity and mission of the group. Even small pockets of division have major effects on the group, destroying the collective witness of the Body of Christ. When disruptive division or arguing occurs, both parties will be asked to meet with the youth ministry staff to mediate the conflict. Students who will not own up to their roles in the conflicts and attempt to exist peaceably with the other students will face the same disciplinary steps discussed below in section five. Typically, we allow students' emotions to cool for one week before we take any disciplinary action for lack of reconciliation.

5. Physical Bullying or Fighting

Would you send your child to a meeting knowing there's a good chance he or she will get assaulted? Not likely. Parents need to know they are leaving their child in a safe environment. To that end, we do not permit physical fighting--period. Students who engage in physical bullying or fighting will face the following steps:

- The students will be asked to leave the meeting or activity and an adult worker will phone the parents/guardians to pick up the students early. The situation will be discussed with the parents and the students will be given a cooling off period away from all youth ministry activities for two weeks.
- If there is a second offense, the students will be suspended indefinitely.

6. Physical Displays of Affection, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct

- We do not permit tickling, wrestling, piggyback rides or inappropriate touching (which means: do not touch anyone anywhere that a bathing suit would cover). In addition, physical displays of affection such as kissing, full body hugs, sitting on laps, and lying or sleeping next to each other are inappropriate and being isolated or alone with another student is not allowed.
 - Students who offend these policies will be counseled by the youth ministry staff.
 - On the second offense, the parents/guardians will be notified.
 - If there is another offense, the students will be given a cooling off period from youth activities for two weeks.
- Students who engage in sexual harassment or sexual misconduct will be counseled by the youth ministry staff, their parents will be notified, and the students will be sent home. In addition, depending on the severity of the situation, there will be a two to four week suspension from youth ministry activities. The church leadership will also be notified. If recommended by the church leadership and/or required by law, the police and/or other authorities will also be contacted.

7. Inappropriate Clothing

Students are not permitted to wear clothing that is sexually suggestive or spiritually degrading. T-shirts or other clothing with evil, vulgar, illegal, or inappropriate content will not be permitted. In addition there should be: no midriffs, no low-cut tops, no spaghetti straps (tank tops must have straps at least two fingers wide), no see through clothing, and no sagging pants (no boxers or underwear showing). Dress shorts or jean shorts must have at least a 4 inch inseam, and athletic shorts must be properly fitting with an inseam of at least 2.5 inches (not rolled up). Ladies are required to wear modest one-piece bathing suits or modest tankinis. Guys—no Speedos.

- Those deemed to be wearing inappropriate clothing by the youth ministry staff to youth activities, trips or classes will be given a large, over-sized t-shirt to wear over their clothes.
- Those wearing swim suits deemed to be inappropriate by the youth ministry staff will be required to wear a dark over-sized t-shirt over their swim suits.
- For long trips such as camps or mission trips, bathing suits must be approved by youth ministry staff prior to the trip. If inappropriate bathing suits are brought on such trips, they will be confiscated and the student will not be permitted to swim.
- The parents of repeat offenders will be notified. If the inappropriate dress continues, further disciplinary actions including suspension may be taken.

8. Use of Electronic Devices

Electronic devices tend to cause disruptions in our meetings, quarrels between students, or the isolation of individuals. Therefore, the use of cell phones, iPods, cameras or other personal electronic or entertainment devices is prohibited during activities and services.

- Special rules apply to trips: Bringing these devices on trips is highly discouraged and according to the needs of the trip is sometimes prohibited. On some trips the devices are allowed but may only be used during designated times. If students choose to bring such devices on approved trips, they do so at their own risk. The youth ministry staff does not take responsibility for the safe return of these items.
- Devices used during undesignated times, whether on the church premises or on trips, will be confiscated until the end of the service, trip or event.

9. Teen Drivers

Teen drivers are not allowed to carry other teen passengers to a youth ministry meeting, activity, or trip without prior written consent from a parent or guardian. Sibling passengers are at the discretion of the parents and do not require written consent. Teen drivers are not allowed to drive along with or behind the group on youth trips. There is zero tolerance for problems in this area.

10. Return after Suspension from Youth Activities

Students wishing to return to youth ministry activities after a cooling off period or suspension will be asked to meet with the youth minister and/or youth ministry staff before returning so that appropriate behavior expectations may be reviewed.