



SOUTHSIDE PARISH RENEWAL

CHRIST THE KING • ST. BARNABAS • ST. CAJETAN • ST. JOHN FISHER

Journey Youth Safety Policy

Journey is deeply committed to protecting the safety and well-being of every young person in our care. To fulfill this responsibility, all staff and volunteers must follow our safe-environment policies and comply with Illinois laws. This manual outlines the procedures and guidelines that help create a secure, respectful, and lawful environment for all youth participants.

Training and Code of Conduct

All staff and recruited volunteers who work with youth must complete approved VIRTUS child-safety training before engaging in programming with minors. This ensures that every adult understands the risks children face, how to prevent abuse, and how to respond if concerns arise. In addition, all staff and volunteers must agree to a code of conduct that clearly defines appropriate behavior when interacting with youth. Signing this agreement demonstrates a personal commitment to maintaining a safe and professional environment. (See appendix for examples of “red flag” behaviors and possible indicators of maltreatment.)

Screening and Eligibility

Every adult who works with youth must undergo criminal background screening and checks of the Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect registry (CANTS) before engaging in programming with minors. These screenings help ensure that those in contact with minors are safe and trustworthy. Staff or volunteers under the age of 18 may not be placed in supervisory roles and cannot be counted in adult-to-youth ratios, as supervision requires experienced, responsible adults.

Any individual who drives for Journey programs must provide a valid driver’s license, proof of current auto insurance, and written permission for Journey to obtain a motor vehicle report.

Recognizing and Reporting Abuse

Staff and volunteers must be able to recognize signs of abuse and respond appropriately. While this manual cannot list every possible situation, good judgment is always required. Illinois law designates all program personnel as mandated reporters. This means anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect must report it to the state

hotline at 800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). If a child is in immediate danger, 911 should be called first. Reports made in good faith are protected by law, and reporters are not required to give their names.

In addition to contacting authorities, all incidents must be reported to an appropriate program leader immediately (e.g., Executive Director, Youth Minister, or Southside Parish Renewal Director). Detailed documentation, including dates, times, statements, and actions taken, should be recorded, but calling for help must never be delayed in order to complete paperwork. If the alleged abuser is clergy or church personnel, the Archdiocesan Office for the Protection of Children & Youth (312-534-5205) must also be notified.

Preventing Abuse and Managing Risk

To protect both children and adults, screened adults should be present for youth activities. Meetings should take place in open or visible spaces, avoiding unsupervised areas, and minors should never be locked in or out of rooms. Activities should be age-appropriate and properly supervised, with clear attendance records, permission forms, and medical information kept on file.

Electronic Communications with Youth

Electronic communication with youth must be professional and transparent. Personal texts or social media interactions with youth are prohibited, and all messages should include a parent or supervisor in communications between supervisors and youth. One-on-one electronic communication is prohibited; only group messages that include a parent or supervisor are allowed.

Prohibitions on Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

A safe environment includes a strict policy against alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Adults may not use, possess, or be under the influence of these substances while supervising youth. Smoking, including vaping, is prohibited on all premises and within 20 feet of entrances. Possession of illegal substances may result in confiscation and notification of law enforcement. Providing these substances to minors is strictly forbidden, and prescription medications must never be used in a way that could impair supervision.

Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions

Staff and volunteers should avoid being alone with a minor. If individual attention is required, it should occur in open, visible areas with another adult present when possible. Privacy of minors should always be respected, including in restrooms and locker rooms.

Overnight Trips

Chaperone ratios should ensure adequate supervision, with mixed-gender groups including both male and female chaperones. At least one chaperone should be over 25 years old. Sleeping arrangements must provide separate, same-gender spaces for youth, with adults in separate rooms. The sharing of beds or sleeping bags is not allowed. Permission slips must detail the activity, dates, locations, and emergency contact information.

Drivers must meet age, licensing, and insurance requirements. Vehicles must have seat belts for all passengers, and drivers may not use phones while driving. Weapons are prohibited in all vehicles. In the event of an accident, 911 should be called first, witnesses documented, and program leadership notified immediately. Insurance requirements and reporting procedures must be followed.

Incident Reporting and Emergency Preparedness

In any emergency, 911 should be called first. Staff and volunteers should move youth to safety according to established procedures, administer first aid as qualified, and contact parents or guardians. All accidents, injuries, or suspicious incidents must be documented in incident reports. Emergency plans, including fire, tornado, and lockdown procedures, must be available at each site, and communicated to youth and adults. A current contact list of parents, guardians, and emergency numbers should be maintained for every youth participant.

Technology and Photo/Video Use

No youth may be photographed or videotaped without written parental consent. Any images of youth should only be used for program purposes and according to parental permissions. All devices should be used responsibly and professionally.

Accountability

The organization reserves the right to take disciplinary action against any staff or volunteer who behaves in an unsafe, inappropriate, or unprofessional manner. All personnel are expected to report violations of the code of conduct to a supervisor or program leader (e.g., Executive Director, Youth Minister, or Southside Parish Renewal Director).

APPENDIX

Examples Of “Red Flag” Behaviors and Possible Indicators of Maltreatment

Staff and volunteers must be able to recognize signs of abuse and “red flag” behaviors that abusers often use to target minors. These standards are meant to guide employees and volunteers when working with youth. Because this manual cannot describe every possible situation, all staff and volunteers must use good judgment at all times. If a behavior is not listed here, this does not mean it is allowed.

| “Red Flag” Behaviors | Possible Indicators of Maltreatment |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working to gain an individual’s trust by gathering information about the individual, getting to know their needs, and finding ways to fill those needs• Tactics such as gift giving, flattery, gifting money, and meeting other basic needs• Isolation tactics to reinforce the relationship with the individual by creating situations in which they are alone together• Introducing inappropriate touch in the relationship, such as a touch on the shoulder, asking for a hug• Possessiveness and special preference for a specific person• Over-protectiveness or excessive control of the child’s activities and relationships, often refusing to allow age-appropriate independence• Consistently criticizing, belittling, or humiliating the child, either in public or privately• Blaming the child or others for problems and refusing to accept responsibility for their behavior• Boundary violations, including inappropriate discussions, exposure to adult issues, or behaviors with sexual overtones | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, bite marks, or fractures, especially in patterns like grab marks or impressions from objects• Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen• Persistent hunger or malnutrition• Begs or steals money from others• Reporting that there is no caregiver at home• Has difficulty walking or sitting• Demonstrates extreme behavior, severe depression or anxiety, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts• Reluctance or fear of going home or appearing afraid of parents or caregivers• Blood, semen or other physical markings on the individual’s clothing, bedding, towels, or in other areas of the environment• Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease• Unusual or prolonged crying, screaming, or other form of noise made by an individual• Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior• Runs away• Negative changes in behavior patterns• Unusual or more extreme displays of fear• Avoiding specific persons |

Additional Resources:

- [About Child Abuse and Neglect | Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention | CDC](#)
- [The Real Red Flags of Grooming | What Every Parent, Educator, and the Public at Large Needs to Know - National Children’s Alliance](#)
- [What Is Grooming? Signs and How To Stop It](#)
- [Tips for Recognizing Child Abuse](#)

Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Staff and Volunteer Behaviors

Physical Conduct Boundaries

| Appropriate | Prohibited |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respecting personal space • Handshakes • High-fives • Light shoulder pats • Staying in open, observable settings • Two-adult presence during trips and activities • Ensuring privacy and modesty • Fist bumps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing • Lap-sitting • Wrestling or tickling • Prolonged physical contact • Any touch that can be misinterpreted or unwelcomed • Being alone 1:1 in private spaces with minors • Physical punishment of any kind • Car rides alone or late-night visits • Using physical force except in true emergencies to prevent serious harm • Nudity • Taking overnight trips alone with a youth |

Communications Conduct and Boundaries

| Appropriate | Prohibited |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind, calm speech • Positive reinforcement, encouragement, and praise • Age-appropriate conversations • Honest, supportive communication • Program-related communication only, copying a supervisor or parent • Transparent, documented communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profanity or insults • Yelling or verbal abuse • Sexual or adult topics • Sharing personal secrets with youth • Bullying, teasing, or ostracizing speech • Private texts, DMs, or personal chats with minors • Sharing personal photos, jokes, or suggestive content • “Friending,” following, or messaging minors on personal social media |

Professional Conduct and Boundaries

| Appropriate | Prohibited |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as a mentor or role model • Fair and equitable treatment without bias • Requesting help when overwhelmed • Uses age-appropriate activities and materials • Maintaining a drug-, alcohol-, and smoke-free environment • Reporting concerns immediately • Reporting suspected child abuse to authorities • Ensure that my supervisor is aware of all youth programming activities • Ensure that no minors are left unattended after programming concludes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for favoritism or special treatment • Sharing personal problems or discussing romantic interests with youth • Failing to intervene when a co-worker is acting inappropriately • Intentionally meeting youth outside of program activities • Possessing violent or sexually explicit materials during any program activity • Using medication in ways that limit ability to supervise • Giving personal gifts to youth without parental/guardian consent |