

# **First Baptist Church of Springfield**

## **Middle School and High School Guidelines**

Effective January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2012

see bottom of final page for important notice

### *Introduction*

The youth ministry of the First Baptist Church is well known for its positive attitude and demeanor toward teenagers. All the adults invited to serve as leaders tend to affirm and encourage rather than criticize and condemn. Leaders believe an atmosphere of Christ-like, unconditional love and affirmation provides more motivation to grow and change than an atmosphere of bombastic criticism.

Even so, leaders recognize that for any group to function, healthy parameters are important. Teenagers who have grown up in the church need structure and guidance. And, for the increasing number of teenagers with no upbringing in the faith, this is doubly true. Many teenagers in the community struggle with serious issues these days. When they become involved at church, they bring those problems with them. Because ministers, parents, and leaders are all partners in the rearing of teenagers, it is important for all three groups to approach discipline and guidance at church from the same perspective. The following guidelines have been developed by those same three groups as a guide to those who touch the lives of teenagers.

### *Worship and Classroom Behavior*

Times of teaching and worship are primary in church life. Teenagers and other members who come to church in order to learn and grow deserve to study and worship in an atmosphere where that is possible without hindrance. Leaders have a responsibility to maintain that atmosphere.

Teenagers who make study or worship impossible for those around them need to be moved to an alternative study location. Generally, this will mean spending the remainder of the time with the Minister of Students or an adult appointed by the Minister of Students. Before dismissing a youth from a class or service, leaders have a responsibility to tell a youth that his or her behavior warrants dismissal. Youth who choose to continue disrupting should then be dismissed. In most cases, leaders should inform parents when a dismissal has taken place. This is especially true for middle school students. In most cases, a youth who has been dismissed from a group should be welcome at the next meeting.

At the same time, leaders need to try and discover what is motivating a student to misbehave. The youth ministry family should seek to meet those needs if possible.

### *Respect Toward Leaders*

Youth who choose to participate in First Baptist youth activities agree to follow

the instructions of leaders. Obeying those instructions and exhibiting respect toward leaders is a condition for remaining at an activity.

### *Trip Policies*

The church assumes heavy responsibility when taking teenagers out of town. For the youth group to function well when out of the city, obeying and respecting sponsors is essential. A serious breakdown in these areas must result in the teenager returning home to parents. Whenever possible, a leader will provide transportation home for the teenager. If that is not logistically possible, then the parents of the teenager pay for commercial transportation home. Parents agree to support sponsors' decisions about sending a youth home, knowing that only those present on the trip can know all the variables involved.

On all trips, being sent home will result if youth participate in any of the following: breaking curfew, body piercing or permanent tattooing, possessing alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products, leaving the group, "making out", stealing, assault, or the possession of pornography or a dangerous weapon. Any other serious failure to follow trip guidelines will result in a trip home.

### *Weapons*

The physical safety of the youth group is one of our church's top priorities. Therefore, no teenager may possess a gun, knife over 3.5 inches closed, open knife, martial arts item, or any other weapon at any youth group activity at the church or away. The presence of a dangerous weapon will result in an immediate call to 911 and full cooperation with the authorities who respond. In the meantime, the sponsor in charge will coordinate a plan with other leaders to best protect the safety of the youth present. Actual confrontation with a teenager with a gun will be left to the proper authorities. If practical, parents of the involved youth will be contacted. This is a serious matter and will be treated as such. If a youth jokingly makes a false accusation it will be treated as a serious matter and disciplinary action will follow.

### *In-Town Policies*

Assault, alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons as described above, pornography and tobacco products are not permitted at youth group activities. The breaking of this policy, including any other serious failure to follow youth group guidelines, will result in the teenager meeting with the Minister of Students, Youth Volunteer and Parent or Legal Guardian.

### *Physical Discipline*

Parents have not assigned to church leaders the right to physically discipline teenagers. Therefore, leaders only make physical contact with a teenager in order to prevent a greater harm, such as during a fight or an attempt to harm one's self. With rare exception, no physical restraint is appropriate.

### *Physical appearance (Dress)*

It is important for us as we participate in and off campus that we do our best to wear appropriate clothing. If something is offensive, a student may be asked to change clothes. Other clothes will be provided by the church.

Many activities will involve swimming. Girls are required to wear a one piece bathing suit or an appropriate cover up. If they don't have one, a t-shirt will be provided. Guys are asked to wear a t-shirt to and from the pool. Swim trunks need to be worn in such away that no "crack" is showing.

### *Physical Affection*

Interest in showing physical affection toward the opposite sex is considered a normal and healthy part of maturing teenage relationships. Our youth ministry also believes that appropriateness should dictate the extent of affection shown at youth group activities. Holding hands and light hugs are almost always appropriate. On special occasions (such as at the end of a day on a retreat) a light kiss on the cheek is fine. "Making out" in trip vehicles and on church outings is not appropriate and receives the same response as any other broken guidelines.

### *Location of Youth*

Church leaders can only be responsible for teenagers who are actually in an area designated for a youth activity. Parents have no way of knowing whether teenagers are where they should be and, consequently, whether leader supervision is being provided. Therefore, it is the policy of our youth ministry that all teenagers on church property must be in the actual area where the announced activity is taking place. The only options open to teenagers are to be in the designated class or activity area or to leave the church property.

Church leaders only provide supervision for 15 minutes after the end of a youth activity at church. Parents providing transportation home are responsible for knowing the ending time of the activity and arriving within that 15 minutes. Youth wanting to remain on church property after these times must have the Minister of Students permission.

### *In-Town Transportation*

The church provides adult-driven vehicles for every activity away from the church. For all trips further than approximately 75 miles, adult-driven transportation is the only option for youth. Licensed drivers may take their cars on activities closer to home. Church leaders always announce when it is possible for youth to drive. Parents have the responsibility to clarify with their teenager whether teenage-driven vehicles are an option.

Church leaders cannot be responsible for the safety of youth-driven cars and cannot guarantee the quality of driving. Also, church leaders cannot be responsible for youth who leave activities in youth-driven cars. The timely return of youth to church can only be guaranteed to youth in church-provided transportation.

Church-provided cars and vans must have a seat belt available for every passenger.

### *Vandalism*

The church requests that parents insure that their teenager pay for any vandalism or willful damage to property.

### *Conclusion*

These policies are provided as a proactive way to insure clear communication among members of the youth ministry family. For many years First Baptist Church has provided a positive, loving, and affirming atmosphere for teenagers. Thankfully, teenagers and leaders enjoy a mutual respect that results in very few discipline issues.

### **IMPORTANT:**

In order to attend activities with FBC Springfield, You must agree to the guidelines and rules set forth in this document.

You must have a signed medical form on file with FBC Springfield, on the Medical Release Form there is a section for you to sign and agree to this document.

The Permission / Medical Release Form is available for download at [www.AntiochU.org](http://www.AntiochU.org) and can be acquired from the FBC Springfield Office.