**WSCC STUDENT MINISTRY SAFETY POLICIES**

**Communication**

More and more, students’ lives are moving online and so is their communication. Texting and social media are more prevalent than ever and they’ll only continue to grow. As we learn to minister in this new digital age, it’s important that we use these new tools with wisdom and discretion.

1. Connection with parents is always our desire and their preferences should always be honored (i.e. if they prefer you not text their student). The closer you are to a student, the more connection you should have with their parent(s).  Parents should never be caught off guard about your communication with their child. Never meet with a student in-person unless the parents are aware of it and approve (other guidelines about meetings will follow below). Let parents know of your role with West Side’s student ministry (group leader, mentor, staff member) and the reason for your interaction with the student.
2. Ongoing conversations with students of the opposite sex in your ministry area or younger are not permitted.  Encourage connection with leaders/staff of the same gender and keep all conversations outside of ministry events and parent-approved hang-out sessions brief.
   1. For example, if an opposite sex student contacts, you keep your conversation focused on quickly and directly answering ministry related questions. Do not follow up with additional questions that encourage the online conversation to continue. If additional interaction is needed, refer them to a leader of the same gender or ask to talk with them at the next student ministry program.
3. Keep a record of all communications with students (i.e. don’t delete texts or use communications channels, like Snapchat, where a record isn’t kept).
4. If you ever receive a questionable communication from a student, regardless of gender, take a screenshot and immediately send it to the West Side staff member to whom you report. If a student of the opposite sex repeatedly initiates contact with you, report it to a supervisor.
5. When questions arise (in person or digitally) related to homosexuality or gender confusion, your staff leader should be made aware within 24 hours for the purposes of coaching and added accountability.
6. When possible, keep digital conversations public rather than private (rather than direct messaging them, make your interaction public on twitter, FB, etc).
7. Without fail, if you ever have any hint of suspicion or even question about relationships, or conduct in general, of volunteers or staff leaders you must take that concern to your appropriate supervisor immediately.

It’s not enough to just place limits on not being alone with someone of the opposite gender anymore.  More and more our lives are being lived online and texting/social media is an easy place for unhealthy relationships to form.  If you’re ever unsure about the appropriateness of a conversation or relationship, communicate with your team leader immediately. The time to reach out to your staff leader is the first time you wonder whether a relationship has entered an unhealthy place.

**Driving**

All drivers must be out of high school, classified as a WSCC volunteer and have a driver’s license in good standing. All drivers must follow the rules of the road and drive with wisdom. Drivers not traveling as a part of large caravan for a trip where you might end up alone with a student must exclusively drive members of the same gender and they must confirm with parents prior to providing transportation.

**Events & Overnights**

All additional events with groups of students (overnight or not) should first have the approval of student ministry staff. Anytime students are with us overnight we must have parent contact info. Arrival or departure of a student that deviates from the promoted beginning and ending time requires contact with the parents to confirm that they know. Only G or PG movies are allowed, regardless of age. When it is time for bed, leaders must sleep in the room with students so they're able to monitor them and should never be alone in a room with one other student. Leaders should never share a bed with a student. Both top and bottom clothing is required at all times with no undergarments showing. No photography at all is allowed while students are in their bedtime apparel.

**Mentoring**

High quality mentoring relationships can be life changing! As a staff we want to help facilitate those in the best ways possible so please inform your staff leader if you’re entering a mentoring relationship with a student. As you do, we ask that you follow these guidelines for the protection of both the leader and the student(s). Parents should be aware of any ongoing relationships. Meetings should always be in public places. Any meetings off of the WSCC campus should have parent permission. Our digital communication policy should be followed closely. Mentoring of opposite gender students is never allowed.

**Addressing Controversial Topics**

Encourage respect & obedience to parents and authority figures. Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know” and offer to look into it more this week. If your personal opinion differs from the stance of WSCC, keep your opinion quiet. You are an extension of WSCC leadership. Leaders should not discuss their personal sexual history with students at any time. The response to inquiring students: “Group leaders are not permitted to discuss our sexual history. I made a commitment to our staff not to talk about that part of my personal life.”

**Reporting**

We live in a fallen world where it is a reality that our students may face some really tough stuff. As they begin to open up to you never promise 100% confidentiality to a student. Student ministry leaders MUST tell a student ministry staff member immediately if you ever even have a question of there being any kind of abuse, anything that may be a danger to others or to them self or any sexual confusion. If you're not sure, tell us anyway. We will then work with you to make a plan and potentially contact the necessary people.

While rare, exceptions might be made to a few of these policies but never without the express permission of student ministry staff.