



CAMP  
Safety Policies and Procedures



Dear Youth Volunteer,

Welcome to Cypress Youth!

At Cypress Methodist Church, we take our responsibility to care for campers very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and excellent camp experience for all those who spend time at Methodist Church.

This handbook provides a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Methodist Church staff members and volunteers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for campers, and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Methodist Church *Leadership*



# **Cypress Methodist Church Safety Policies and Procedures**

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## **Overview of the Cypress Methodist Church Safety System**

Because we care for and desire to protect campers, Cypress Methodist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before placement.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Cypress Methodist Church Policies and Procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a Supervisor or a member of the Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee.

Staff members and volunteers must have a basic understanding of the *abuser's grooming process* and *common grooming behaviors*. Grooming is the process used by a sexual abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of any relevant 'gatekeepers'), manipulate the child into sexual activity, then keep the child from disclosing abuse.

To equip Cypress Methodist Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behaviors, Cypress Methodist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training. This training will be renewed yearly.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Cypress Methodist Church Screening Process, which includes:

- Employment Application or Volunteer Application
- Face-to-Face or Phone Interview
- Reference Checks

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page, indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.



#### **STEP FOUR: Background Check**

Cypress Methodist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers undergo a Background Check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of Background Check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve at Cypress Methodist Church. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

*\*The policy segment above is intended to clearly identify for an applicant with inappropriate motives the barriers to access to children at Cypress Methodist Church. In addition, the segment describes measures meant to equip staff members and volunteers to recognize abuser characteristics and behavior. These policy segments provide an **opt-out opportunity** for would-be abusers.*



## Camper Safety Policy

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Cypress Methodist Church supports and maintains a **zero-tolerance** policy concerning child abuse and neglect. It is a violation of Texas law for any staff member or volunteer to abuse or neglect any child participating in Cypress Methodist Church programs. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to act in the best interest of campers in every camp program.

In the event staff members or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional or sexual), it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations to an immediate Supervisor, Cypress Methodist Church Administration, or a member of the Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee.

*Designations may vary depending on the size, structure or reporting relationships within an organization. This segment should identify the position or title of the individual to whom staff members or volunteers are to report.*

*Note: In some states, mandatory reporting to law enforcement or child protective services is a **NON-DELEGABLE DUTY**. In other words, telling a supervisor does **NOT** fulfill the mandatory reporting obligation.*

*In several states, employers **MAY NOT require** an employee to notify a supervisor or employer of the occurrence of a mandatory report.*

***KNOW YOUR STATE'S LAW!***

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Cypress Methodist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Cypress Methodist Church policies. Anyone working with children at Cypress Methodist Church is subject to the supervision and evaluation of Cypress Methodist Church leadership and must follow these guidelines. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment for both staff members and volunteers. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of Cypress Methodist Church **Administration** and the **Camp Director**.



*These positions or titles may vary depending on the structure or reporting relationships within the organization.*

## **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Cypress Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to local law enforcement (or Child Protective Services) and the Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee.

Cypress Methodist Church intends to create and foster a culture of communication, encouraging the reporting of safety concerns or policy violations. Because sexual abusers *groom* children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness *grooming behaviors* intended to manipulate a child into sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers must report suspected grooming behaviors, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a Supervisor or a member of the Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee.

### **REPORTING POLICY VIOLATIONS**

In order to maintain a safe environment for campers, Cypress Methodist Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of each individual's responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that constitutes a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate Supervisor, a Cypress Methodist Church **Administrator**, or a member of the Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee.

*These positions or titles may vary depending on the structure or reporting relationships within the organization.*

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing an act considered harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation at Cypress Methodist Church. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement, Child Protective agencies or Cypress Methodist Church.



Any person found to have committed a prohibited act may be precluded from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving campers at Cypress Methodist Church. If an employee, such conduct may result in termination of employment.

## **REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE**

*When in doubt, report.*

### **Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Cypress Methodist Church to carry out appropriate camp activities while safeguarding campers against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

#### **COMPOSITION**

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

- Cypress Methodist Church Student Director
- Parent Volunteers

*\*These positions or titles may vary depending on the structure or reporting relationships within the organization.*

#### **MEETINGS**

The Safety Committee will meet on a monthly basis during camp season to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee may also meet, when necessary, to address a circumstance or respond to the report of any incident or allegation. At the end of the camping season, the Cypress Methodist Church Safety Committee will meet to discuss what, if any, changes are necessary to Cypress Methodist Church's policies or programming to ensure camper safety.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:



1. Applying existing Cypress Methodist Church Policies and Procedures related to camper safety and risk management issues
2. Monitoring all Cypress Methodist Church programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to the Cypress Methodist Church Administration

## **MyCamp Staff Monitoring Plan**

Monitoring of staff members and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits to each program to provide supervisors an opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interaction with campers:

1. The Cypress Methodist Church **Administrator** conducts written performance evaluations every quarter for Student Director.
2. The Student Director conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations for each staff member and volunteer in his/her program area. This evaluation will include matters covered in this policy manual and adherence to risk management procedures.

### **SUPERVISION**

MyCamp staff members and volunteers are expected to provide adequate supervision for campers in their care while working at the camp. Only staff members, screened volunteers and campers are allowed on MyCamp property during camp sessions. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately either checked in or escorted off of the property. If questions or concerns arise related to any individual in the area, the Student Director should be notified immediately.

### **ADULT-TO-CAMPER RATIOS**

Student Director is committed to providing appropriate supervision in all camp activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed:

| <b>Group Size</b> | <b>Minimum Staff Members/Volunteers</b> |
|-------------------|---|
| 2-10 campers      | 1                                       |
| 11-29 campers     | 2                                       |
| 30+ campers       | 3                                       |



This ratio may change depending on the activity (i.e. swimming, archery, etc.).  
**Note: The Two Adult Rule constitutes best practice in any child-serving context. Regardless of context or activity, Cypress Methodist Church works proactively to limit interaction between any staff member or volunteer and a *single* camper; such interaction must be subject to supervision or within line of sight of another staff member.**

If a worker is *out of ratio*, it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the responsible Student Director. The Student Director will make diligent efforts to immediately bring camp ratios into compliance with this policy.

## **INTERACTION WITH CAMPERS**

No camper will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during camp programming or activities. Cypress Methodist Church staff members and volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual camper in any location which cannot be observed by others. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single camper, that staff member or volunteer must take the camper to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a camper desires conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, the staff member or volunteer is to relocate the discussion to a place where other staff members are present, or which is easily observed.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving to ensure that there is no camper left unsupervised.

Cypress Methodist Church recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of campers may occasionally require staff members and volunteers to meet with them on an individual basis. Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual camper at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed by others. If you need to talk with a camper alone, do it in a designated or highly visible area, or have another adult with you.

## **RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

In activity areas, remember to circulate, watching campers during recreational periods, giving particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under equipment, in corners, behind structures.)



## **MONITORING HIGH-RISK AREAS**

Any areas on camp property where campers are not directly supervised is a high risk area. In these areas, campers may more easily bully and abuse (verbally, physically or sexually) each other. Every staff member and volunteer must be aware of the potential for bullying and abuse, and monitor camp locations where campers may be alone or less directly supervised.

For activities involving large numbers of campers, staff members and volunteers will be assigned to monitor high risk areas for the duration of the activity. Monitoring of high risk areas will be built into the programming and planning for these events.



High-risk areas include:

- All bathrooms on camp property
- Night activities
- Water activities
- Changing areas (during day and night)

Any two campers together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

## **OFF-LIMIT AREAS**

All Cypress Methodist Church staff members and volunteers will be responsible for ensuring that campers are not in areas deemed off-limits.

## **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. At least one staff member or volunteer is required to be in the sleeping area with campers at all times. Notwithstanding an appearance that campers are sleeping, the staff member or volunteer will not leave the cabin or sleeping area.
2. Staff members will monitor sleeping areas by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure campers remain in designated sleeping areas.
3. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers must never touch a camper.
4. Campers may not share a bed, bunk or sleeping bag with another camper or staff member/volunteer. Each staff member, volunteer, and camper will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.
5. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn to bed.





## **Camp Culture – Staff Members & Volunteers**

### **PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Your physical grooming makes a statement to campers, parents and other staff members and volunteers. While serving at Cypress Methodist Church, we ask that you limit your freedom concerning hairstyle, clothing and other outward physical accessories and fashions. If you have questions about your personal choices in these matters, or whether an article of clothing or style is appropriate for wear at Cypress Methodist Church, please consult the Student Director.

### **MODESTY**

Your choice of clothing makes a statement. While serving at Cypress Methodist Church, we ask that our female staff members and volunteers help us create an atmosphere of modesty by wearing one-piece bathing suits, and covering swimwear with t-shirts and shorts while not participating in water activities. We ask our male staff members to show similar respect to women by wearing t-shirts when not participating in water activities, and to avoid Speedo-style swimsuits.

### **DATING**

Public displays of affection between dating couples are not permitted under any circumstances. We expect professional behavior at all times.

### **MODELING BEHAVIOR**

What staff members do in moderation, campers will do in excess: campers look to staff members to set appropriate boundaries.

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Cypress Methodist Church is committed to protecting the campers in its care. To this end, Cypress Methodist Church has implemented a physical contact policy which promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting campers.

The following guidelines must be followed:

- Physical contact in any form must be above reproach, for the benefit of the camper, and never based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even an appearance of wrongdoing.



- The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers must foster trust at all times.
- Side hugs, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members and campers are important for child development and are generally suitable in the Cypress Methodist Church setting.

AVOID the following interactions:

- Never touch a camper in sensitive areas (breasts, buttocks, genitals), even if a camper has been injured in one of these areas. Never allow casual contact in these areas, under or over clothing.
- No sitting on laps.
- No hand-holding, unless part of a worship/prayer service or a group game.
- Never touch campers in anger or disgust.
- Never touch a camper in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
- Avoid touching a camper between the navel and the knees.
- Never carry a camper piggy-back, or on your shoulders.
- Never place hands beneath a camper's clothing to play, rub or comfort.
- Never tickle, participate in 'horse-play' or wrestle with a camper.
- No staff member or volunteer will ever (day or night) be on or in a camper's bed.

Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant camper. A camper's preference not to be touched must be respected.

Physical affection should occur only in observable locations or when in the presence of other campers or Cypress Methodist Church staff members. It is much less likely that touch will be misinterpreted when more than two individuals are present and the touch is open to observation.

Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting campers under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including other campers.

Inappropriate touch or displays of affection are forbidden.



**Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be immediately reported to Student Director or the Cypress Methodist Church Administrator.**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Staff members and volunteers must maintain a high moral standard in social media presence. Inappropriate social media content may be a basis for suspension from Cypress Methodist Church. Please be cautious about the content of the posts on your personal social media. Please ensure that photos or videos posted on social media reflect Cypress Methodist Church guidelines related to alcohol, tobacco and modesty (dress, posture and content).

## **Camp Culture – Campers**

### **DISCIPLINE**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavior management of campers. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by campers.

If a camper is misbehaving, follow these steps:

1. Go to the camper and calmly ask him or her to stop the behavior. (Most campers respond immediately and correct the behavior.) Give a warning and remind the camper of expectations, and redirect to a positive behavior. Do this individually when possible, try not to single out a specific camper in a large group setting.  
*\*When working with younger campers, some physical redirection may be necessary: for example, removing an object from the hands of a camper who is hitting another.*
2. If the camper repeats the action, guide him or her to a quiet place – separate from the other campers – for a short but designated period of time. Stay within sight of others, and avoid being alone (or unseen) with the camper.
3. Provide the camper with a simple, understandable reason for the separation, and a clear explanation of your expectations. (“Georgia, you didn’t stop hitting Cole when I asked you to, so it was necessary for me to separate you from the group.”)



4. After a third time, refer to the Student Director. The Student Director may inform a parent or guardian, who may be asked to be involved in redirecting misbehavior.

#### *NEVER...*

- Yell at a camper.
- Grab a camper.
- Threaten a camper.
- Hit a camper.
- Openly humiliate a camper in front of the group.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to the Student Director. If a camper is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from a staff member/volunteer, the Cypress Methodist Church Administrator will contact the camper's parent. If the behavior persists, the camper's parent will be contacted to pick up the camper.

In the event of a fight or physical altercation, a staff member or volunteer will verbally redirect campers involved, trying to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the Student Director and/or the Cypress Methodist Church Administrator.

## **BULLYING BEHAVIORS**

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in Cypress Methodist Church programs.

Verbal, physical and emotional bullying may occur during 'free time' or at night when the lights are out. When lights are out, maintain a presence in the camper cabin area at all times until everyone is asleep.

It should be made clear at the beginning of each session that verbal, physical or emotional bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. At the first sign of bullying behaviors, act decisively. There is no 'harmless putdown' where bullying is concerned.

1. *First Offense:* Give a warning to the camper and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is wrong. Try not to embarrass or chastise.
2. *Second Offense:* Pull the offending camper(s) from the group and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals.



Let the offending camper know that the next step is a meeting with the Cypress Methodist Church **Administrator**. Notify the Cypress Methodist Church **Administrator** of ANY signs of bullying behaviors.



Privately, but with another adult present, confirm that the camper who was the target of the bullying behaviors is not in danger of continued harassment and is physically and emotionally stable. **Do not single a camper out in front of the group...** be discreet.

3. *Third Offense:* The staff member and camper will meet with the Cypress Methodist Church **Administrator** and place a phone call to the camper's parents.

## **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and campers should be positive and uplifting. Cypress Methodist Church employees and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging and constructive.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to campers in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, employees and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing or using profanity in the presence of campers.

## **RESPECTING CAMPER PRIVACY**

Make sure campers understand the importance of respecting each other's privacy. A camper's bed is his/her home, and the camper's trunk/suitcase is off-limits to anyone but the camper. In addition, shower time is a very private time. During showers, only those who are taking showers should be in the bathroom or shower stall.



## Rules for Camper Safety

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Staff members and volunteers may, from time to time, be in a position to provide transportation for campers. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of campers:

- Campers should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops in a non-public place should be avoided.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one camper in transport. The presence of at least two staff members or volunteers is encouraged.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with campers while in vehicles.
- Absent an emergency, **cell phones may not be used by drivers** while transporting campers (other than navigation applications for directions). In an emergency, stop the vehicle to use the cell phone, unless a stop cannot safely occur. Texting or other cell phone use is strictly prohibited while driving.
- No drivers under age 21 may drive Cypress Methodist Church owned or rented vehicles.
- In transportation, the TWO ADULT RULE or RULE OF THREE must be followed.
- Transport only the number of campers for whom you have seatbelts.
- Seatbelts should be worn at all times while in the vehicle.
- No one should be double-buckled.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with campers, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any camper in the program. If it is necessary to address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality, clear such discussions with the Student Director.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers at Cypress Methodist Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, images, videos, etc.) at Cypress Methodist Church or in the presence of campers.



## **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers at Cypress Methodist Church should never be nude in the presence of campers.

## **TOBACCO**

Cypress Methodist Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products while on Cypress Methodist Church property, and while in the presence of campers or their family members. Cypress Methodist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

## **INTOXICANTS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any Cypress Methodist Church facility, while traveling with campers, or while working with or supervising campers.

## **MEDICATION**

Do not administer medication of any kind to any camper while serving in Cypress Methodist Church programs, including over the counter drugs. A medical professional dispenses appropriate medications consistent with signed parent permission forms.

## **VISITORS DURING CAMP SESSION**

Friends and family are a great source of encouragement. However, it is difficult for staff members to interact with guests while discharging responsibilities as a staff member or volunteer. Visiting friends and family are not permitted at camp without written permission from the Student Director.

## **Camper Contact Policy**

### **COMMUNICATION WITH CAMPERS OUTSIDE CAMP CONTEXT**

The Cypress Methodist Church safety standards established to protect campers and ensure healthy relationships during camp should be respected *outside camp* as well. In addition to camp safety standards, the following policies should be respected in all interaction with campers occurring outside camp.

- Parents must approve any and all interaction with his or her child, including communication by phone, texting or email, social network interaction and

personal visits. No interaction may occur without the knowledge and approval of the camper's parents or guardian.

- If a camper requests to become a 'friend' or 'follower' on any social media platform, permission from parents must be received before accepting these requests.
- Current or former staff members must never be alone with a camper in an unobserved context or location. This policy applies both inside and outside camp.
- Current or former staff members must limit connections by gender: male staff members may not initiate or maintain contact with female campers, and female staff members may not initiate or maintain contact with male campers. Dating or romantic relationships of any sort between staff members and campers are strictly prohibited.
- If a family invites a current or former staff member to visit, these visits must never occur in an overnight context.
- Current or former staff members must never invite campers to spend the night at the staff member's home, or in any other context or location (vacation etc).
- Just as in camp, if a camper shares information that puts the camper or any other individual in danger, the parents of that camper must be immediately notified. When in doubt, err on the side of caution, and contact the Cypress Methodist Church Administrator for counsel.



## **Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Cypress Methodist Church's Safety Policies and Procedures manual, and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines during my service at Cypress Methodist Church.

I understand that the manual may be modified and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Cypress Methodist Church.

I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my volunteer position description.

I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of the Cypress Methodist Church Policies and Procedures manual.

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Staff member or volunteer name (please print)

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Staff member or volunteer signature

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Date

*This page is to be signed,  
delivered to the Cypress Methodist Church Student Director.  
If you need a printed copy, you may request one in the church office.*