

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NEVADA CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
YOUTH MINISTRY POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

**PROPOSED 3/2015**

**SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

**SECTION 2: COMMUNICATING POLICIES TO PARTICIPANTS**

**SECTION 3: ADULT LEADERS**

**SECTION 4: POSSESSION OR USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS AND OF ALCOHOL**

**SECTION 5: WEAPONS**

**SECTION 6: TOBACCO**

**SECTION 7: USE OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT**

**SECTION 8: DRESS CODE**

**SECTION 9: SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

**SECTION 10: VIOLENT BEHAVIOR**

**SECTION 11: SEXUAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT**

**SECTION 12: SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

**SECTION 13: FOOD**

**SECTION 14: ATTENDANCE AT MEALS POLICY**

**SECTION 15: VISITORS TO YOUTH EVENTS**

**SECTION 16: TRANSPORTATION OF MINORS**

**SECTION 17: PARTICIPANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL  
LIMITATIONS**

**SECTION 18: HEALTH SUPERVISION**

**SECTION 19: REGISTRATION**

**SECTION 20: PROCEDURES FOR BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION**

**SECTION 21: DISMISSING A YOUTH OR ADULT PARTICIPANT FROM A YOUTH EVENT**

**SECTION 22: PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION**

**SECTION 23: PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE, SEXUAL  
AND PHYSICAL ASSAULT**

**Sections Added in 2015**

**SECTION 24: FACEBOOK ADMINISTRATION**

**SECTION 25: SOCIAL NETWORKING**

**SECTION 26: EVACUATION AND EMERGENCIES**

**SECTION 27: INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

## **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NEVADA CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST YOUTH MINISTRY POLICIES & PROCEDURES 3/2015**

### **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

The Board of Directors of the Northern California Nevada Conference United Church of Christ, in commitment to the life affirming values of the church, in order to honor the range of attitudes in our Conference constituency, and to meet legal and moral obligations, has developed the following policies for:

- The NCNC Outdoor Ministries Program;
- NCNC sponsored Youth Programs;
- Events and programs beyond the Conference when groups of youth and their adult leaders are representing our Conference at regional, denominational, ecumenical and other events and/or programs;
- Guidelines for local churches and clusters of churches sponsoring youth gatherings, programs and events.

*(Youth are defined as any participant who is under 18 years of age and/or still in high school)*

These policies should be communicated by all available means to youth, their leaders, local congregations, parents and any interested persons. Every effort should be made to clarify the expectations of the Conference to all groups associated with the Conference sponsoring youth activities. *Please reference the Director's Manual for orientation guidelines and policies.* The orientation to all youth events should include expanded verbal communication of the policies, specific rules pertaining to the event and possible consequences of inappropriate behaviors. This aspect of orientation is best set in the positive context of community building and affirmation of the vision, mission and goals of Youth Ministry in the NCNC.

### **SECTION 2: COMMUNICATING POLICIES TO PARTICIPANTS**

At the beginning of an event an orientation is held. The purpose of this session is to inform the participants of the policies of the Conference applicable to the event; to convey rules specific to the event; familiarize participants with the characteristics of the facilities and area in which the event takes place; give participants an opportunity to ask questions and engage in a discussion of community behavior that will be conducive to all participants feeling physically, emotionally and spiritually safe. At the end of this session, the policies, rules and specific needs elicited from participants becomes the Covenant for the event.

Possible consequences for breaking the Covenant are also communicated. The most serious violations of the Covenant are behaviors that create an unsafe environment for oneself and/or others, or that threaten to irreparably undermine the creation and development of safe and

affirming community among the participants. These behaviors would include, but are not limited to: physical or threatened violence against oneself or others; use or possession of alcohol or illegal drugs, inappropriate sexual conduct, and continuing patterns of uncooperative or otherwise inappropriate behavior disruptive of the event. Worst case consequences of violations are contact with law enforcement officials and/or parent(s) and being sent home immediately. Persons dismissed from an event for breaking the covenant must take part in a reconciliation process in order to participate in future events or face an 18 month suspension from Conference youth events. **(See Process of Reconciliation)** Adult leaders who violate the covenant at a youth event, program or camp may be dismissed and may be subject to exclusion from future Conference youth activities. Such a decision is made in consultation with Conference youth leadership, event organizers, the Director of Outdoor Ministries and the Conference Minister. An adult who is excluded from volunteering as a youth leader for Conference activities will be notified in writing of the reasons for exclusion.

### **SECTION 3: ADULT LEADERS**

Our youth programs would not survive without the help of our adult leadership. It is their support, love and guidance that have made our Youth and Outdoor Ministries program what it is today: a generation of young people that have a connection with God and each to other. In order to continue this legacy, we must make sure our adult leaders are well trained and informed about Conference policies.

#### **Staff Application Process:**

At NCNC UCC camps and youth events, a person must be at least 18 years of age to serve as a member of the adult staff. In order to serve at events for youth in Senior High the age requirement for adult staff persons is as follows:

- Feb Camp – Adult staff must be at least 23 years of age.
- Senior High Camps and Fall Youth Event – Adult staff must turn 23 years of age by the end of the year in which they serve.

**Summer Camps:** All adults interested in counseling and/or directing at a summer camp will fill out an application. Applicants must submit to a background check and have appropriate references. Staff applications will include one of the following: two references, one from a church official who knows the person and one from someone who has known the person for at least five years ; or a written review of that person's performance at a similar camp in the past 1 or 2 years. Camp staff is chosen at the discretion of the Directors. Directors will be chosen by the Director of Outdoor Ministries alongside the Chair of the OMC, with advice from the committee.

***Please Note:*** *There are instances where the camp staff requirements have been filled but there are people still interested in being on staff. In such cases, there may be times where camp directors will allow these individuals to pay their own way to be on staff. Camp staff paying their way to camp must go through the application process described above. The commitment and expectations of the paying staff differs in absolutely no way from a non-paying staff member. Paying to be on staff is not a guarantee however that one will automatically be allowed to be on*

staff. It is still up to the discretion of the camp Directors whether or not the individual will be chosen.

**Fall Youth Event/Mid-Winter/Feb Camp:** Adults who are coming with a church's youth, whether they are parents of a youth, youth leader or other church congregant, must first be approved by a member of that church's ministerial staff. Ministerial staff may sign for themselves. The church sending that adult to an event is responsible for making sure that the proper background checks and references are in place before the event. The adult registration form must be signed by a church official from the congregation which the adult represents.

•Adults who wish to be a part of a leadership team for our annual youth events, but *will not* be accompanying youth as a church's appointed chaperone, must submit a staff application and acceptance to the event is at the discretion of the event directors.

**Expectations:** Adult counselors, event leaders, chaperones and other supervisors of youth are charged to model behavior and language that fits the setting of a caring, affirming community. Adult leaders are expected to be people who enjoy working with youth, understand the importance of boundaries and covenant, and want to work closely with a team to create an amazing event environment. It takes a special person to volunteer their time and energy to help foster the lives of our youth; we hope that our local churches share in this belief and will assist us in making sure that the right adults get selected to assist/attend events. These beliefs include that adults:

- follow and adhere to the Conference's policies regarding tobacco use, electronics, sexual harassment, physical/sexual assault, suspected abuse reporting, dress code, social media
- demonstrate good decision making
- demonstrate the ability to create appropriate boundaries with youth participants
- follow and respect the event's covenant
- help create and nurture a loving, safe environment for our youth

Adults who are found in violation of these expectations at a youth event, program or camp may be dismissed and may be subject to exclusion from future Conference youth activities. Such a decision is made in consultation with Conference youth leadership, event organizers, the Director of Outdoor Ministries, and the Conference Minister. An adult who is excluded from volunteering as a youth leader for Conference activities will be notified in writing of the reasons for exclusion.

***Please see Section 20 and 21 for further instructions.***

#### **SECTION 4: POSSESSION OR USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS AND OF ALCOHOL**

Possession or use of illegal drugs and of alcohol are prohibited at NCNC youth events, activities and programs. Under certain circumstances the Event Leaders may be legally obligated to contact authorities. Only in the case of the most serious violation, such as certain evidence of drug dealing, are law enforcement authorities to be contacted. Anyone who violates this policy can expect to be dismissed from the event, following procedures previously described.

Persons who have brought illegal drugs or alcohol to an event will have the opportunity to turn them in immediately following orientation, without prejudice, that is, the person will not be sent home. Items turned in will not be returned. Report any incident of this nature to the both the Director of Outdoor Ministries and the Conference Minister, who may decide to do follow up with the person. Any person attending a youth event in a supervisory role will covenant to report violations of this policy to the Event Leadership, whose responsibility it is to process the situation. Every effort should be made to process these situations in a way which assists the violator(s), other participants, and the community as a whole to maintain the integrity of all participants, the program, consistency of policy application, and the overall welfare of NCNC Youth and Outdoor Ministries. The Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister shall be notified immediately of any violation of the drugs, alcohol or sexual behavior policies, and will be a participant in making decisions regarding the incident.

***See the health form and other documents regarding the handling of prescription and other legal drugs at youth events.***

#### **SECTION 5: WEAPONS**

Possession of weapons, such as guns and knives, is strictly prohibited at youth events and camps. Potential weapons that are turned in to Event Leadership up until the end of the orientation session will be held for the course of the event and handed over to an adult at the end of the event. Failure to turn over a weapon, threats, or the actual use of a weapon will result in the person being dismissed and could involve the summoning of law enforcement.

#### **SECTION 6: USE OF TOBACCO**

California State Law prohibits minors under the age of 18 years from purchasing, being in possession of, or using tobacco products. Minors in possession of tobacco products at Conference events will be in violation of the covenant. Adults who wish to use tobacco products while attending camps and other youth events must abide by the restrictions of the facility at which the event is held and must not smoke or otherwise use tobacco in the presence of minors.

#### **SECTION 7: USE OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT**

In order to create an all-inclusive community, where each member can be present in the short time event participants have together, youth attending Conference events may be asked to leave electronics at home. Since each event is different in nature, the use of electronics is up to the discretion of the directors.

***Please see the separate OMC Social Networking Policy for online safety guidelines.***

#### **SECTION 8: DRESS CODE**

Appropriate clothing for youth participants and staff are expected at all Conference events.

- Clothes are expected to fit appropriately--pants need to stay at the waist, underwear should not be showing

- Tops and shirts must cover the torso--strapless, mesh, half-shirts, spaghetti straps or back-less tops are not appropriate
- Bathing suits are allowed at the pool only, not at other areas of the event.

## **SECTION 9: SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

At Conference gatherings, the development of affirming relationships among youth is encouraged. Developing friendships is a primary goal of youth programming. It is inevitable that some relationships become affectionate; creating a safe environment is conducive to this. Youth often need guidance to keep their behavior within acceptable limits at youth gatherings. It is important that limits be clearly defined. With high school youth, discussion on this subject at the orientation session should be matter of fact. Inappropriate sexual behavior includes sexual intercourse, oral sex, disrobed petting, long kisses, and fondling embraces. Couples going off to places where they cannot be seen by anyone is also inappropriate. (***Please reference Director's Manual for more information***) Supervisors of children and youth of all ages should keep their charges within eyesight, unless they are in the bathroom, changing clothes or showering, in which case they should always be in earshot, in order to monitor the interaction of young people. If, after speaking with persons about their observed inappropriate affectionate or sexual behavior at an event, the behavior continues, follow the procedures for behavior intervention. Accusations of sexual harassment or assault could involve legal issues and must be processed carefully. Contact the Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister for assistance.

Sexual behavior by individuals that does not involve anyone but the individual may be inappropriate and embarrassing to others. It may also be a sexual offense. Leaders should follow the procedures described. Such behaviors should not be part of the orientation discussion of appropriate behavior.

It is also expected that adults working with youth at Conference events also adhere to these policies. Adults should model appropriate behavior related to this policy in terms of interaction with other adults at event. Under no circumstances should any sexual behavior be occurring between an adult leader/participant and a youth at Conference events or any other time.

***Please see Sections 20 AND 21 for more information.***

## **SECTION 10: VIOLENT BEHAVIOR: Physical and Verbal**

It is the intent of the people of the NCNC that all gatherings of the people be free from fear. The number one priority of our Youth and Outdoor Ministries programming is Safety: physical, emotional and spiritual. Conflicts are a normal part of life and can be resolved without resorting to physical violence or abusive language. Children and youth should be encouraged to go to the adult leadership for help to resolve conflicts. No one has the right to put another person at risk, threaten the safety of others, or create a climate of fear or intimidation. Acts of violence toward other persons or property are not to be tolerated. Such acts or threats of violence need to be dealt with quickly and seriously, stopping or minimizing danger to anyone, including the perpetrator of any violent act. Call 911 if you need assistance to remove a violent person and restore a safe environment. Do not endanger others in attempting to restrain a physically violent person. If a

person threatens violence with a weapon, keep others at a distance and attempt to resolve the situation calmly. Do not hesitate to call 911 if you need help to end a dangerous situation. Abusive or inappropriate language: Cursing, racial epithets, disparaging comments, and sexual references will not be tolerated. *Adult counselors, event leaders, chaperones and other supervisors of youth are charged to model behavior and language that fits the setting of a caring, affirming community and will at no time relate to youth or children with threatening, abusive or sexual language or harassment.*

## **SECTION 10: SEXUAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT**

The people of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ expect that all persons in leadership positions will act in ways that exemplify the teachings of Jesus Christ, providing love, care and concern for the well-being of others at all times.

Conference clergy, employees and volunteer workers will not physically, sexually, emotionally, verbally, or in any other way abuse persons who participate in Conference sponsored programs or activities. The Northern California Nevada Conference has adopted the following policy on inappropriate sexual conduct:

*“The Northern California Nevada Conference of the UCC is committed to supporting its congregations and pastors as they seek to create and maintain communities in which lay persons and pastors can work and worship, enjoy fellowship and render ministry together in an atmosphere free of all forms of inappropriate conduct and harassment, exploitation or intimidation, including sexual. Specifically, every member of the Northern California Nevada Conference should be aware that the Conference is absolutely opposed to inappropriate sexual conduct, including sexual harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by law. It is the intention of the Conference to take whatever action may be needed to prevent, correct, and if necessary, initiate discipline for behavior which violates this policy.”*

In California, abuse is defined as: *“...any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child’s physical or emotional health and development. This includes: physical abuse and corporal punishment resulting in a traumatic condition; emotional abuse; emotional deprivation; physical neglect and/or inadequate supervision; and sexual abuse and exploitation.”*

The Outdoor Ministries Committee has adopted the following definition of physical harassment:

*“Harassment of the same or opposite sex is offensive behavior including but not limited to unwanted touching of or assault on the breasts, buttocks, groin, or legs, and blocking or impeding movement of another person.”*

It is important that leaders be aware of the messages they give through the ways in which touch of other persons is given and received. They must be able to discern between good, bad, and confusing touch as they work with people. Guidelines regarding sexual abuse and harassment can be found in the training materials used by Youth Leadership and Outdoor Ministries programs in the Conference. Persons who suspect abuse by anyone in a leadership position in the Conference are expected to report that situation to the Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister who will take immediate and appropriate steps to address the situation.



These steps may include required notification of legal authorities when the alleged abuse involves a minor child or an elder.

## **SECTION 12: SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

Reports and suspicions that a minor is a victim of child abuse are taken seriously and will be reported to proper authorities. See the *Camp Directors Manual* for details on recognizing signs and symptoms of child abuse. Please see **Section 23: Procedures for Responding to Reports of Child Abuse, Physical and Sexual Assault** for more information.

## **SECTION 13: FOOD**

Food served at Conference youth events and camps is intended to be nutritious and adequate in portions. At all events, every effort should be made to offer nutritious, well-balanced meals. In order to avoid high sugar and caffeine consumption, participants of Conference youth events are generally instructed to refrain from bringing additional food with them. In rural settings, such as camps and retreats, food in living areas attracts animals. Personal snacks also threaten the environment due to increased littering of wrappers, cans, etc. Food brought to the event in violation of the policy should be confiscated. It might be returned to the person at the end of the event or shared with everyone in an appropriate way. Foods that are not nutritious and healthful should be kept to a minimum. These kinds of foods should not be available at a time when they would interfere with participants choosing to eat nutritious foods. In circumstances where special diets cannot be provided at an event, a participant may make special arrangements to bring food necessary for her/his well-being at the event. The food should be kept in an appropriate location.

## **SECTION 14: ATTENDANCE AT MEALS POLICY**

All persons attending youth events, both youth and adult leaders, covenant to participate fully in the program to the best of their ability. Mealtimes, if included in the program, are no exception. A person who exhibits symptoms of an eating disorder should be cared for with the same concern as someone with any other kind of illness or disorder. The issue should be addressed directly. The appropriate response may include creation of a specific covenant, contacting parents, and/or sending the person home for his or her own safety and well-being.

## **SECTION 15: VISITORS TO YOUTH EVENTS**

Unregistered visitors are not allowed at Conference youth events and camps. Local church pastors, adult youth leaders participating in the program, members of the Outdoor Ministries Committee and other official groups in the Conference, and Conference staff are not considered visitors, but members of the team who contribute to the ongoing Youth and Outdoor Ministries program of the Conference. Those who meet these criteria and wish to attend a portion of an event or camp without registering or applying to be on staff should make arrangements in advance with the Conference Minister and event leadership. They may participate in the event at the discretion of the leadership. Part-time participants should be introduced to the whole community whenever possible.

## **SECTION 16: TRANSPORTATION OF MINORS**

Any minor transported to, from, or during a Conference event, activity, program, retreat or camp by someone other than a custodial parent must have a permission slip and medical release completed and signed by a custodial parent. This documentation should be in the possession of the driver and will be collected at onsite registration for the event. Event leaders will be responsible for turning over transportation forms to those driving minors home from the event.

Non-custodial drivers of children and youth to Conference events must:

- Be 21 years of age or older;
- Possess a valid driver's license;
- Have at least the minimum insurance coverage required by law;
- Have signed permission and medical release forms from the custodial parent.

It is recommended that two adults be present in every vehicle in which minors are transported.

Minors will not be released to adults other than custodial parents without parental permission. Persons age 18 and over may drive to Conference events and may transport other persons age 18 or over. Persons between the ages of 18 and 21 may not transport minors with the exception of their own siblings. Persons violating this policy may be subject to engaging in a process of reconciliation. If allowed to remain at the event, the person's car keys will be confiscated and they will not be allowed to drive from the event. In either case the person will be considered to be in violation of the covenant.

Vehicles used for transportation during youth events must be owned by a parent, a Conference staff member, a Conference related church, or a volunteer leader of a youth activity. In addition, the vehicle may be on loan to the Conference or rented by the Conference. Due to the lack of sleep characteristic of overnight events, it is highly recommended that designated drivers be afforded every opportunity to get a good night's sleep prior to driving home.

If campers/youth are to be transported off campus during an event, all adults will have all needed records on file at the NCNC UCC Conference Office one week prior to the event. The OM Registrar will notify the camp/event director of those that are cleared to drive youth.

The driver must be at least 23 years old. Campers/youth may not drive other campers/youth during the event.

Needed Paperwork Includes:

1. Copy of valid driver's license
2. Copy of proof of insurance
3. Copy of the insurance Coverage and Limits of Liability page

It will be noted on the Transportation Release on the NCNC UCC OM website that in the event of an emergency, campers/youth will be transported off campus as directed by site staff, by all means necessary to ensure safety.

## **SECTION 17: PARTICIPANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL**

### **LIMITATIONS**

**Intention:** Youth and Outdoor Ministries programs of the Northern California Nevada Conference recognize the potential for great value in including children and youth with special physical or emotional limitations. Therefore, such participation is encouraged whenever practical. It may, however, be possible that such participation could detract from the overall goals of the program. We must do everything possible to ensure that all participants have a safe, healthy, educational, Spirit filled experience.

**Pre-acceptance discussion:** All limitations or handicaps which might affect an individual's ability to participate in a specific program or event must be discussed with the appropriate people prior to the event. This could include the youth, parents, event leadership and the Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister. The decision about participation of a person with limitations will be the responsibility of the event leaders and the Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister. All information provided in the course of making such a decision will be kept confidential, unless release of information is expressly authorized by a custodial parent.

**Arranging the program:** The leadership will make every effort to arrange the event or program so that all campers can participate as fully as possible in all activities. The leadership must weigh the benefits of modeling integration and participation by people with different gifts, as well as the potential for special learning opportunities to be gained by all participants against safety concerns and the detraction from the overall goals of the camp on a case-by-case basis. The leadership will take into account such factors as: available resources within the staff (providing safe levels of supervision for all youth), physical layout of the site and facilities and accessibility. Creative imagination together with input from the individual and family members can make possible a rewarding experience for everyone in most situations.

**Covenant:** Before the leadership agrees to register the applicant, after appropriate consultation, all concerned parties will agree to any special conditions and expectations which will pertain to the event or program. This could include the need for someone to provide one-on-one assistance, e.g. an ASL interpreter. Such a person would be required to cooperate with the event leadership at all times.

**Sending a participant home:** It needs to be understood and agreed that event leadership has the authority to send a person home at any time during an event or program if behavior, limitations or other circumstances make the situation unsafe for that person or others. Parents are encouraged to discuss with the Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister and event leaders any possible circumstance or limitation that would affect the quality of their child's experience or merit special attention while at an event.

**Emergency contact:** Parents of a child or youth with special limitations should be especially aware of notifying event leaders of their whereabouts during an event and being reachable at all times, in case an unexpected situation arises which necessitates their presence or the removal of their child or youth.

### **SECTION 18: HEALTH SUPERVISION**

At all camps and youth events that involve an overnight, a person will be designated to provide health services. These services will include, but not be limited to first aid and the intake and dispensing of all medications, prescribed or over the counter to all participants. **(See exceptions to this policy in UCCR and American Camp Association health supervision guidelines and California State Law.)**

The minimum requirement for fulfilling the role of health supervisor is certification in advanced First Aid and CPR. Particularly for events lasting over 72 hours, we seek to engage as health supervisors people who are trained at the level of emergency medical technician, licensed vocational nurse, or registered nurse.

### **SECTION 19: Check In**

At all events for which advance registration is conducted, there will be an onsite Check In process which will include review of the health form and parental permission for medical treatment and determination of proper transportation permission for minors. If persons who are registered for an event do not arrive within a reasonable period of time, event leaders will make every effort to contact parents and inform them that their child or youth is not present at the event.

### **SECTION 20: PROCEDURES FOR BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION**

- **Step 1 Level of intervention:** Whether to dismiss a person for inappropriate behavior or to issue a warning is often a difficult decision. Each situation is unique. Event Leaders in consultation with the Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister and other leaders are responsible for making these decisions. If at all possible, we want to keep youth at the event. Those who are having a difficult time fitting into the community, even if they are expressing that difficulty with inappropriate behavior, perhaps need that sense of Christian community desperately and can benefit from it most. If the energy can be redirected, if the behavior can be turned around, a person has the potential for a life changing experience. Given all that, leaders must consider the welfare of the whole community over and above the welfare of any one member. The reason for this is that if one person threatens the safety of the community, then the setting is not appropriate for ministering to the needs of that individual. The Process of Reconciliation is an attempt to minister to the needs of the individual who is removed from a youth event.

***Please refer to the Section 22: Process of Reconciliation.***

- **Step 2:** The Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister should be notified if anyone is sent home or leaves a youth event unexpectedly for any reason. The Director of Outdoor Ministries and Conference Minister will follow up immediately with parents of any camper who leaves camp due to a health problem or who is dismissed due to misconduct. Once the decision is made to intervene, camp leadership needs to decide between the following two alternatives:

**A. Immediate removal due to inappropriate behavior:** The best guideline for determining whether to send a person home is to ask this question: Does the continued presence of this person at camp present a serious ongoing risk to the physical, emotional or spiritual safety of anyone at camp, including him or herself? If the answer to this question is “yes,” the person needs to be removed. Situations where this would be the case include, but are not limited to acts of physical, or sexual violence; continual verbal violence or abuse; refusal to adhere to restrictions or prohibition on smoking; continued alcohol or drug use; continued disregard for the covenant, the authority of leaders, or the common goals of the community; inability to comply with a specific covenant regarding a change in behavior.

**B. Issuing a warning** and creating a specific covenant as terms under which a youth or adult member may remain at the event: Offenses that do not jeopardize the continued safety of members of the community may be able to be rectified by talking with the person and determining a needed change in behavior.

*If the leadership decides to allow the person to remain at the event:*

### **1. Warning and Covenant**

- a) Ask the person if he/she wants to stay. A desire to continue to stay at the event is necessary as an effective incentive for agreeing to any change in behavior.
- b) Create a covenant with the person describing in detail the expected or needed behavior. The person should express a willingness to abide by this covenant. The covenant should be signed by the offender and by an adult in charge of the event or camp.
- c) Call the parent(s) (in the case of a youth or event leader who is a minor).
  - i) Describe the specifics of the offense.
  - ii) Explain the specifics of the covenant agreed to by the offender and leaders.
  - iii) Inform parents that any further infraction will result in immediate dismissal from camp and the need for a parent or agent of the parent to remove the person immediately.
- d) Call the Director of Outdoor Ministries
  - i) Describe the offense, action taken, terms of covenant.
  - ii) Give the name and phone number of the parent(s) contacted.
- e) Review details of the covenant with the leader most immediately

responsible for that youth.

- f) Review the status of the person's compliance with the covenant on a daily basis with him or her and the counselor in the case of a camper. (Not necessarily together.) One event leader should be assigned to follow the progress of the covenant.
- g) If the person improves and abides by the covenant for the remainder of the week, a final review should be held with the director. Thank and praise the person for contributing in a positive way to the camp community. A handwritten note to this effect after camp would provide additional reinforcement. Be sure to speak with the parent personally if they pick up their child after the event.
- h) If the person fails to abide by the individual covenant, the decision will be made to have the person leave the event. *Follow the procedures listed under Section 20 if the decision is made to dismiss a person from a youth activity.*

## **SECTION 21: DISMISSING A YOUTH OR ADULT PARTICIPANT FROM A YOUTH EVENT**

### Dismissing a Youth Participant

- If removing a minor, call the parent or guardian and arrange for someone to pick the person up as soon as possible. If this proves to be impossible, contact the Director of Outdoor Ministries for assistance in arranging to remove the person. It is of utmost importance to minimize the time the person remains on site after being removed from the program.
- Remove the person from the program. (Rules regarding one staff person never being alone and out of sight with a minor apply while supervising someone who has been removed from the program.)
- Process the incident with the rest of the community. This can be done as a whole group (not including the person being sent home), or by briefing the leaders and having them process the incident in small groups. Event leaders and other staff should be willing to answer appropriate questions asked by adults or youth but should not reveal confidential or embarrassing information or personal opinions about the person who is sent home or any other individual involved.
- Meet with the parent when a youth is picked up. Facilitate the initial encounter between the parent and person being sent home. Answer any questions. ***Give the parent a copy of the letter from the Director of Outdoor Ministries and a copy of the Policy of Reconciliation. (These documents are provided for every event.)*** Help them understand the Policy of Reconciliation before leaving. (If a person with permission of the parent picks the person up, written material should be sent home and this information should also be conveyed as soon as possible to the parent by phone.)
- Inform the parent that the Conference Minister will phone the person sent home, the parent, and the home pastor within a week to review the incident and facilitate the Process of Reconciliation.

### Dismissing a staff participant

If a member of the adult leadership of a youth event commits a serious breach of the event's covenant, directors will have to decide whether to dismiss the staff person from camp. Again, the first criterion for making such a decision is safety. Can this person still be relied upon to perform his/her duties regarding the supervision of youth? Losing a staff person means increasing the number of youth per adult leader, thus it cuts down on the level of supervision. However, depending on the offense, a staff person may create a threat to the safety of youth participants and other staff. Again, the Director of Outdoor Ministries and the Conference Minister are available to help onsite leadership weigh the risks in these cases. In rare cases, we may decide to keep the person on staff with a specific covenant, but suspend him or her from serving on staff in the future, perhaps pending the completion of an individualized process of reconciliation.

### **SECTION 22: PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION**

The following process of reconciliation is offered when appropriate to youth and adults who have been removed from the program of a summer camp or other Conference youth event or activity. If a person does not wish to engage in this process of reconciliation, they are excluded from participation in Conference youth activities for 18 months. The purpose of this policy is to create an opportunity for learning and insight and to reinstate the participant as soon as possible to full participation in the Conference youth community.

#### **Steps of the process:**

1. **Suspension:** Leaders decide a participant must leave the event. In the case of youth, the person is not permitted to attend the next youth event for which he/she is eligible by age.
2. **Intervention and reconciliation:** A Covenant Committee of three persons is formed. This committee ideally will consist of a member of the Conference Youth Leadership (Outdoor Ministries Committee or Youth Leaders Network), an adult member of the faith community, and a peer of the person removed from the event.

The peer will be someone who is not acquainted with the person removed and who was not present at the event in question. It is also desirable that one of the adults be a minister and one be a lay person. This committee meets with the person removed and an advocate of that person's choice (youth pastor, church member, parent, etc.) to develop a plan of insight, discipline and reconciliation. (Altogether five persons are involved in this process.) The plan might include counseling, biblical research on the concepts of "covenant" and "reconciliation", and restitution (church or community service). Creativity in finding the appropriate plan of action is highly encouraged.

3. **Confidential review:** After an agreed upon time frame the Covenant Committee meets with the youth in question to review progress of the agreed upon plan of reconciliation.
4. **Vote:** If satisfied with the progress of the plan of reconciliation, the Covenant Committee may vote to restore full privileges of the person to participate in youth events of the Conference.

Conference Youth Leadership and the Director of Outdoor Ministries are notified in writing that the plan has been carried out successfully.

## **SECTION 23: PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**

It is of primary concern that both children and adults be safe at NCNC events and that when possible the experiences offered through Conference youth ministries be transformational in the lives of all who participate in it. Although we may wish victimizing situations did not exist, sometimes this time away from home becomes the opportunity for a child or an adult to share with a trusted person the painful experiences of their lives. When this happens, it is our calling as leaders to make responsible and appropriate response to help alleviate the pain and take appropriate action toward removing the threat under which a particular child, youth or adult lives. Two possible events are discussed here: (1) situations that occur at the event and (2) situations that occurred in the past or are ongoing in the person's life.

- 1. Situations that occur at an event or camp:** These may include, but are not limited to, physical assault, sexual assault, and sexual molestation. In the event of a report of such an act occurring at your event, call the local police immediately. At camp, you may seek assistance from the site director. But do not delay in notifying the police when a person has allegedly physically injured or sexually attacked another person. After calling the police, immediately contact the site director when at camp, the Director of Outdoor Ministries and the Conference Minister. If you do not reach the Conference Minister directly, leave a message stressing the urgency of the situation. Either stay by the phone, or make arrangements for someone to cover the phone where you want the call returned. Remember that assault and child abuse are against the law. If a person physically or sexually abuses another person, it is most appropriate to ask the police to assist you.
- 2. Situations that occurred in the past or are present in the person's life outside the camp setting:** This type of situation may come to your attention because it is reported by a child to a camp counselor, another youth, other staff, or directly to you. It may come to your attention because of physical, verbal or emotional symptoms exhibited by a child or youth. While we follow the policy of reporting suspected child abuse to the authorities, it is possibly better not to state this bluntly to participants. The law does not require anyone to warn another person that confidentiality will be broken in certain instances. Issues of confidentiality probably do not need to be raised with young children (under age 12) at all in an abstract manner. **When going over the camp policies with older children (age 12 and up) issues of confidentiality might be put in this way: "Of course, anything of a personal nature shared with a staff person will be kept confidential. However, sometimes campers share with us very bad problems and we cannot help them without getting help from another person, possibly a professional. If we feel we need help to help you with a really bad problem, we may have to share the situation with someone else."** All staff should be advised that, if approached with the request to "promise not to tell" before the issue is shared, they should not make such a promise. An appropriate response might be, "I certainly want to keep our talk confidential, but sometimes I can't because I might need help to help you. We will have to talk for a while before I will know whether I can promise not to tell." In any circumstance, remember it is a far greater sin to allow a



child to go back into a dangerous or hurtful environment without taking action than it is to break a promise not to tell. Instruct all adult leaders to report to the event leadership, health supervisor or chaplain any cases of suspected child abuse, either reported verbally, or observed.

It is impossible to set rigid guidelines in these situations, because every case is different and needs to be judged individually. In some cases, other people might be consulted before making a decision to report to Child Protective Services. In other cases, it may be best not to notify anyone off site prior to reporting. For this reason, the Director of Outdoor Ministries should be informed as early as possible of any situation of this nature arising at camp. Use a “team approach,” consulting with such people as the health supervisor, chaplain, any other clergy or mental health professionals present at the event. Whether onsite or offsite, the director of Outdoor Ministries, will be included as a member of that consulting team. It is probably most logical for an eyewitness to the situation to make the report to Child Protective Services. Also, remember that clergy, health care professionals, and educators are mandated reporters.

Event Leadership will report any incident of suspected child abuse, or any incident of illegal activity at one of our event sites to the Director of Outdoor Ministries immediately. The Director of Outdoor Ministries will be kept up to date on any developments. If anyone from outside the camp, such as a representative of the media, asks questions about any incident at camp, refer them to the Conference Minister.

**Verbal reports and written reports:** The law on child abuse reporting states that with mandated reporters a verbal report must be made immediately and a written report must be filed within 36 hours. Report forms will be provided. If you call Child Protective Services, be sure to ask if you need to file a written report. When talking with a Child Protective Services officer, take notes of your conversation. Include the date, time and name of the officer, any instructions she or he gives you, and a synopsis of what was discussed. Fax or mail your notes to the Director of Outdoor Ministries as soon as possible.

#### **SECTION 24: FACEBOOK PRESENCE**

Administrator(s) for OMC Facebook pages will be selected by OMC on a yearly basis with a letter of agreement signed by all parties. This will be initiated by the Director of Outdoor Ministries in consultation with the Outdoor Ministries Committee.

#### **SECTION 25: SOCIAL NETWORKING**

This policy has been developed to facilitate discussion and to help those involved with Outdoor Ministries, both youth and adult, on ways to protect ourselves in a new emerging cyberspace environment. This has also been developed for our churches to reference and discuss with youth and adults they send to Outdoor Ministries Committee functions/activities. These policies will guide us on:

- how to maintain appropriate boundaries between clergy and parishioner, youth leader and group member, employee and employer
- how to acknowledge and respect people's privacy requests

- how to foster a safe, nurturing community

### **Minor to Adult Relationships**

#### Social Networking Sites-Relationship and Group status

1. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. When and where available, authorized youth workers may choose to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
3. If an authorized youth worker chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth that are associated with their community of faith, we recommend that other youth workers (within the same community of faith) have full access to the professional youth worker’s profile and correspondence.
4. Authorized youth workers who choose to accept friend requests from minors or youth should use all privacy settings applicable to shield youth from any inappropriate content that may exist within the authorized youth worker’s profile.
5. All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means (email, social networking site notes or posts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others.
6. We strongly recommend “closed” groups, but not “hidden” groups be used for youth groups. These groups should have both youth and adult administrators.
7. Youth groups should decide within their covenant whether or not their social networking site groups are open to parents of current members.
8. Covenants should be created to govern what is appropriate and inappropriate content to be placed and displayed in the online group for a camp, youth group, etc.
9. Any inappropriate material that is not covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be deleted from the site. Any material that is covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be reported to the clergy (within your community of faith), documented for church records, and then deleted from the site.
10. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by authorized youth workers and parents.
11. Parents should be informed that content that appears on youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of authorized youth workers.

### **Adult to Adult relationships**

## Social Networking Sites-Relationship and Group status

1. Adult members of congregations or communities of faith who seek religious or spiritual advice from clergy via digital means (email, social networking site posts, etc.) should be informed that their communication is NOT confidential. Use of digital means to communicate nullifies confidentiality.
2. When and where available, clergy are encouraged to consider creating a personal and a professional account to maintain appropriate boundaries with members of their congregations or other members of communities of faith.
3. Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from their church members. These encounters may create tension in “real world” relationships.
4. Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
5. Clergy are encouraged to use privacy settings to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.

### **General Recommendations for Communication and Contact**

#### Recommendations for Transitions

1. Former youth members and adult leaders of youth groups, due to departure, removal or loss of eligibility (aged out of a program) should be removed from digital communication youth groups (Facebook groups, list serves, etc.)

### **Recommendations for Digital Covenants**

1. Digital Covenants should acknowledge that materials posted on Outdoor Ministries Committee Sponsored sites (and or group pages) are not CONFIDENTIAL.
2. Digital Covenants should acknowledge that content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
3. Digital Covenants for communities of faith should address the following issues:
  - appropriate language,
  - eligibility of membership (do you have to be a member of a local congregation or youth group, are parents of current members eligible, are there age requirements/ restrictions for participation, etc.),
  - content that can be posted/published on the site or page (Rule of thumb: post your information and not others’),
  - who, how and when may photos be tagged (members identified by name; for example, individuals may tag themselves in photos but should not tag others),

○ stipulate appropriate and inappropriate (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.) behavior of members and the consequence for inappropriate behavior,

○ transitions, due to departure, loss of eligibility or removal of youth members and/ or adult leaders, and

○ mandatory reporting laws will be followed (See glossary of terms for additional information on mandatory reporting laws).

### Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs

1. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
2. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
3. All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
4. All clergy and authorized youth workers should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church, and your content may be viewed as church policy.

### Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Content Online

1. All Communities of faith should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
2. Any congregation that distributes video of its congregational services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media MUST post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
3. Congregations are NOT considered PUBLIC space and therefore must inform participants when they are being videoed.
4. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

### **Glossary of Terms**

*Authorized youth worker* — any adult individual who is designated by a community of faith to work with minor children: This includes chaperones, employees and volunteers.

*Community of Faith* — a congregation, cluster of churches, association or Conference that engages in ministry together.

*Cluster Churches/youth ministries* — two or more congregations that work together to form, support or maintain ministries to and with youth.

*Church Sponsored Sites* — any group, page or list serve that is created by a designated member of a community of faith for the purpose of establishing, maintaining or growing ministries to and with youth and/or adults.

*Mandatory Reporting* — individuals who work with youth are responsible to report to clergy any activity or language which indicates that a minor is being severely harmed (sexual assault, physical abuse or emotional torment) by a youth or adult, considering doing severe harm to themselves (thoughts or plans of suicide) or severely harming others (abuse, homicide or rape). Any information that is posted on a church sponsored site that includes this type of information should be reported to clergy, documented in church records and deleted from the site. If you are a

*Mandated Reporter* – Mandated reporters may include paid or unpaid people who have assumed full or intermittent responsibility for the care of a child, dependent adult, or elders are required by California Law to report activity or language which indicates that a minor is being severely harmed (sexual assault, physical abuse or emotional torment) by a youth or adult, considering doing severe harm to themselves (thoughts or plans of suicide) or severely harming others (abuse, homicide or rape) to Child Protective Services.

*Inappropriate Content* — refers both to content that is improper or offensive, but also content that might be suited to the medium but not to the relationship.

## SECTION 26: EVACUATION AND EMERGENCIES

### **Evacuation**

All directors and chaplains and nurses will be advised of evacuation procedures prior to the event beginning.

All staff will perform an evacuation drill prior to campers arriving at camp.

#### In the event of an Evacuation:

If the event is being held at a site with Site Managers, all staff will follow their direction.

If the event is being held at a site without site managers, all staff will follow the directions of the Event Leader.

### **Emergency**

All directors and chaplains and nurses will be advised of emergency procedures prior to the event beginning.

All staff will perform an emergency drill prior to campers arriving at camp.

#### In the event of an Emergency

If the emergency is site wide and there are site directors, all staff will follow their direction.

If the emergency is site wide at a site without site directors, all staff will follow the direction the direction of the Event Leader.

If an emergency is within the program, all staff will follow the direction the direction of the Event Leader.

## SECTION 27: INFECTIOUS DISEASES

1. It will be noted on camper/youth event and staff health forms that we do not ask about immunizations except tetanus.
2. It will be noted on the camper/youth event medical form and signed by the parental unit that the camper is in good health and that they will notify the director if their child was exposed to any communicable diseases during the two weeks prior to attending any youth event.
3. A flyer with guidelines about sending your child to camp from the Center for Disease Control will be linked to the OMC page on the NCNCUCC site.
4. Upon entry to a camp or event of all staff and youth, the nurse will conduct a health screening to; establish each individual's health status upon arrival and, at minimum, includes the following:
  - a. Observable evidence of communicable disease, injury, illness, and/or active health issues;
  - b. Verification and updates to the individual's health history form;
  - c. Confirmation of medication(s) to be given during camp session, including as-needed or rescue medications;
  - d. Verification of food intolerances, aversions, and special diets as well as other allergies (e.g., to bees, molds, dust).
  - e. The health screening process is documented. That documentation includes date/time of screening, who did it, and the results of the screening process.
5. Proper cough/sneeze covering technique will be taught at the beginning of each camp by the health personnel.
6. Proper hand washing technique will be taught at the beginning of each camp by the health personnel. Hand sanitizer will be provided at each sleeping area and general meeting area. Buckets with soap, water and disposable towels will be provided for each event. Hand washing before each meal will be the standard for all.
7. All public door knobs and handles will be sanitized daily by campers under the direction of camp staff.
8. If a communicable disease/illness spreads through a camp or youth event the camp/event may be closed according to the following guidelines; Camp Caz, if 1/3 of the leadership are ill or 1/2 of the campers are ill, Camp Tam, if 1/4 of the leadership or 1/2 of the campers are ill, youth events, if 1/4 or 1/3 (depending on the adult to camper ratio) of the leadership or 1/2 of the campers, or if at

any time that the leadership feels that safety is a concern; the Director of Outdoor Ministries and facility contact person will be informed and the event will be closed.