

## SAFETY POLICY & PROCEDURES

### ARTICLE I: PURPOSE

At Reformed Youth Ministries, Inc. (“RYM” or the “corporation”), we take our responsibility to care for students very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ without fear of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional attack.

This policy provides a general overview of procedures and guidelines for RYM board, officers, executives, staff members, interns, and volunteers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students while providing physical and legal protection to students, the corporation, and the mission of RYM. The following procedures have been adopted by the Board of Directors and will be strictly enforced.

### ARTICLE II: OVERVIEW OF THE SAFETY SYSTEM

Because we love students and desire to protect them, RYM requires all staff members, interns, and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

#### STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

RYM policies and procedures require that staff members, interns, and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members, interns, and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a student for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip RYM staff members, interns, and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, **RYM REQUIRES ALL STAFF MEMBERS, INTERNS, AND VOLUNTEERS TO COMPLETE “MinistrySafe” SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING (live or online at [www.MinistrySafe.com](http://www.MinistrySafe.com))**. This training must be renewed every two years by all RYM staff members, interns, and volunteers without exception.

#### STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members, interns, and volunteers are required to complete the Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- a. complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- b. complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
- c. complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- d. provide references and permission for backgrounds to be reviewed (employees and volunteers)

#### STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

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

#### STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

RYM requires that all staff members, interns, and volunteers participating in children’s or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

### **ARTICLE III: STUDENT SAFETY POLICY**

#### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

RYM has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff, intern, and volunteer at RYM to act in the best interest of students in every program.

In the event that staff, interns, 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 their immediate supervisor, the Conference Director, an RYM Board Member, or the RYM Chief Executive Officer.

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

RYM is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the RYM Chief Executive Officer, RYM Compliance Officer, the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor, an RYM Board member, or the RYM Chief Executive Officer. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member, intern, or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a student for sexual abuse. Staff members, interns, and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor, the Conference Director, an RYM Board member, or the RYM Chief Executive Officer.

#### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

RYM staff members, interns, and volunteers who supervise other staff, interns, or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all RYM policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Student Ministry positions for volunteers, interns, and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors.

### **ARTICLE IV: REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE**

#### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

In order to maintain a safe environment for students, RYM staff members, interns, and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Conference Director, an RYM Board Member, or the Chief Executive Officer.

#### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the RYM to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in youth related ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or child protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member, intern, or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students, or vulnerable populations at RYM. If the person is a staff member, intern, or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from RYM.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member, intern, or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at RYM.

## **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

Staff members, interns, and volunteers at RYM are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the immediate supervisor of the area, an RYM Board Member, or the Chief Executive Officer.

Florida, Colorado, and Washington laws require that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency. A staff member or volunteer *may* report to immediate supervisor, the Conference Director, an RYM Board Member or the Chief Executive Officer and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

Staff members, interns, and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member, intern, or volunteer in youth ministries, the Conference Director, a RYM Board Member, or Chief Executive Officer will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the student spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Chief Executive Officer will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

If appropriate, the Conference Director, the RYM Board Member or the Chief Executive Officer will inform the State Department of Family and Protective Services or Child Protective Services.

## **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

The Board of Directors, through the Compliance Officer, will take appropriate action on behalf of RYM when a report of abuse occurs.

## **ARTICLE V: SAFETY COMMITTEE**

### **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, RYM will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once per quarter, and once specifically just prior to the summer conference schedule.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable RYM to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

### **COMPOSITION**

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Chief Executive Officer (management representation)
2. Chair, Staff Development Committee (board representation)
3. Staff Representative, Staff Development Committee (staff representation)

### **MEETINGS**

The Chair of the Staff Development Committee, an RYM board member, will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices, compliance, training completion, and potential updates to the policy and procedures. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing RYM policies and procedures related to safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all youth ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the RYM Board of Directors regarding safety issues.

## ARTICLE VI: STAFF MONITORING PLAN

Monitoring of staff, interns, and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member, interns and volunteer interactions with students.

1. **Each supervisor and/or Conference Director** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once during each conference week.
2. **The Chief Executive Officer** conducts written performance evaluations annually for individuals in full time, paid staff positions.
3. **The Chief Executive Officer** conducts periodic verbal performance evaluations that include items that address participation in risk management training and adherence to risk management procedures.
6. **The Board of Directors** meets with Chief Executive Officer once each year to discuss safety compliance, training, policies and procedures for the overall ministry and corporation.

## ARTICLE VII: GENERAL POLICIES

### BUILDING SAFETY

No student will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during youth ministry programming or meetings. RYM staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual student in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single student, that staff member or volunteer will take the student to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a student desires additional conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members are present.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

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

### STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO

RYM is committed to providing adequate staff, intern, and volunteer supervision in all student ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for student ministry activities and programs:

For groups up to and including 10 students, there will be at least 1 staff member, intern, or volunteer supervising. For groups ranging 11 to 29 students, there will be at least 2 staff members, intern, or volunteers supervising. For groups larger than 30 students, there will be at least 3 staff members, interns, or volunteers supervising.

If a worker is out of ratio it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the responsible supervisor. The supervisor will make diligent efforts to immediately bring staff members, interns, or volunteers to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

### DISCIPLINE

It is the policy of RYM that staff members, interns, and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or students. ***NO FORM OF PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE, HARRASSMENT, OR RETRIBUTION IS ACCEPTABLE; WHETHER DIRECTLY ENGAGED OR INDIRECTLY ALLOWED.*** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction or inappropriate behaviors by students. If a student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff, interns, or volunteers, that student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the student's parent will be contacted to pick up the student. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff, intern, or volunteer will verbally redirect students involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the RYM Chief Executive Officer or Conference Director.

## **INTOXICANTS**

Staff, interns, and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while traveling with students or while working with or supervising students.

## **NUDITY**

Staff, interns, and volunteers in RYM's student ministry should never be nude (including partial nudity) in the presence of students in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), staff member, intern, or volunteer will submit a plan to the Conference Director concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

## **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS**

RYM recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff member, intern, and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members, interns, and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students:

1. Staff members, interns, and volunteers should conduct one-to-one open-door meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed unless prior approval is obtained from the Conference Director.
2. In the event a closed-door meeting must occur, the student staff member must inform another staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

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

1. Students should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members, interns, and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver **WHILE DRIVING** vehicles whether personal, owned, rented or borrowed for RYM activities unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive vehicles owned, borrowed, or rented by RYM for RYM activities.

## **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a student in the care of RYM staff members and volunteers will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in RYM programs.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their student is involved at RYM (at their own expense regarding travel, lodging, food, and other expenses). Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with RYM programs will be required to complete the RYM volunteer application and screening process.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

RYM is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, RYM has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our youth ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in the student program:

1. Hugging, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members, interns, or volunteers and students are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the RYM setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching, or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Conference Director, an RYM Board Member, or the Chief Executive Officer.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the student, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member, intern, or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or student staff members, interns, and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff, interns, or volunteers in the student ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Student staff, interns, and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by staff, interns, or volunteers must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Conference Director, an RYM Board Member, or the Chief Executive Officer.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students in a one-to-one setting and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in a one-to-one setting. However, it is expected that from time to time student's ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the students RYM's views consistent with its stated mission, vision, and biblical principles on these topics.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members, interns, and volunteers of RYM are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented printed or online materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) at an RYM conference, training event, or in the presence of students.

## **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

It is anticipated that certain student ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff, interns, and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members, interns, and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be approved by the Executive Director **PRIOR TO THE ACTIVITY**.
2. As long as any one student is awake, one of the leaders must also be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.

3. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
4. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
5. Staff, interns, and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff, interns, and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
6. Whenever possible, at least one staff, intern, or volunteer will sleep in the same room as students or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
7. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff, intern, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.

### **TOBACCO**

RYM requires staff, interns, and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products or “vaping” devices while in the presence of students or their parents.

### **FIREARMS AND WEAPONS**

Ensuring a safe environment and the prevention of violence is of paramount importance to RYM. Weapons of any kind, whether it be possessed by an employee or volunteer of RYM, a student, or participant in any RYM event pose a potential threat to the safety and security of everyone. Firearms of any type are strictly prohibited at all times for RYM events and activities. Additionally, weapons of any type, including, but not limited to, knives with a 3-inch blade or longer, fighting weapons, nunchuks, daggers, throwing stars, brass knuckles, and stun guns are strictly prohibited.

Any individual found carrying such items will be subject to immediate reporting to law enforcement, dismissal from the RYM event or venue, and confiscation of the firearm or weapon to be held by law enforcement until such remedy or action from the violation of possession can be resolved.

Rare and specific exceptions to this policy must be granted by the Chief Executive Officer of RYM to individuals who are licensed to carry such items and are operating within the strict regulations of local, state, and federal law, and are necessary to provide security to the RYM event or activity. Should such exception be necessary, RYM will make every attempt possible to secure a federal, state, or local law enforcement officer or deputy to provide such security.

### **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members, interns, or volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. RYM staff and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and be ever mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of their children.

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



## **SAFETY POLICY & PROCEDURES: ACKNOWLEDGMENT & ACCEPTANCE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

I have received and read a copy of RYM's Safety Policy & Procedures and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at RYM.

Further, I understand that the policy may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by RYM.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in this policy including but not limited to proactively and directly reporting suspicious activity or concerns whether violations have actually occurred or not. I also recognize that time is of the essence in all matters related to safety and that notifications must be conveyed immediately regardless of the time of day or difficulty in providing notice.

I further acknowledge and understand that this policy applies to all those providing service to RYM whether as an employee, intern, advisor, board member, or volunteer and without regard to receiving any compensation for the services provided.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted due to circumstances of a particular event or venue.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT**

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Safety Policies and Procedures of Reformed Youth Ministries, Inc. and have read and understood it, and agree to comply with its terms.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Joseph E Stewart*  
Signature

2/20/18  
Date

Name:  
Title:

Joey Stewart  
Chief Executive Officer, Reformed Youth Ministries, Inc.