

Youth Ministry Communication Policy

Texting, e-mailing, and other forms of electronic communication have become common today, especially among students. Texting and electronic communication can be a vital part of youth ministry work, but their improper use can produce serious consequences.

Promoting Safety

(Name of ministry) desires to promote safety and to create a healthy environment for texting and electronic communication between its youth workers and students who participate in youth ministry activities. As a result, (name of ministry) has developed the following guidelines:

1. Employee and volunteer youth workers who want to communicate with minors using text messaging, e-mail, social networking websites or other forms of electronic media must first sign a consent form and attend a ministry training class. The class will outline the recommended practices, limitations, and legal parameters for texting and other forms of electronic communication within youth ministry.
2. Ministry youth workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities.
3. Except in an emergency, youth workers may not transmit any personal information pertaining to a minor without the youth ministry participant and his or her parents or guardians signing consent forms. This applies to group texting, group e-mail, or any other public method of electronic communication. Personal information may include such things as a minor's name, phone number, e-mail address, or photograph.
4. Youth workers will discourage students from using cell phones during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a leader.
5. Youth workers will instruct youth occasionally about the Youth Ministry Communications Policy and the dangers of such conduct as "sexting."
6. Youth workers who become aware of possible child abuse through electronic media must immediately notify their supervisor. The ministry will consult with its attorney and report abuse as required by law.
7. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels aren't considered confidential.
8. To participate in ministry electronic communications, youths must sign a related consent form.
9. Youths who violate this policy may lose electronic communications privileges or be removed from the youth ministry program. The ministry's pastoral leadership will notify parents immediately of any violation.
10. Cellular phones can cause distraction if used while driving. For safety reasons, youth workers driving on ministry business are not to make calls unless they use a hands-free device. If they receive a cell phone call while driving, the youth worker should answer it using a hands-free device or pull off the road to a safe location as soon as possible.
11. Youth workers driving on ministry business are to avoid cell phone use—even hands-free—when transporting children, while driving in heavy traffic, during hazardous weather conditions, or when it violates local law.
12. Youth workers are never to send or read text messages while driving.