



Merge Community Church

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Children's & Teen Ministry

The Merge Community Church of Westland is a wonderful family of faith that is blessed to have so many children in our midst. We care deeply about the children and are grateful for the adults who volunteer their time to take care of, teach, and advise them. It is because we care so much and believe that the safety of our young people cannot be left to faith alone, that the Church has adopted the following Safe Church policy for youth.

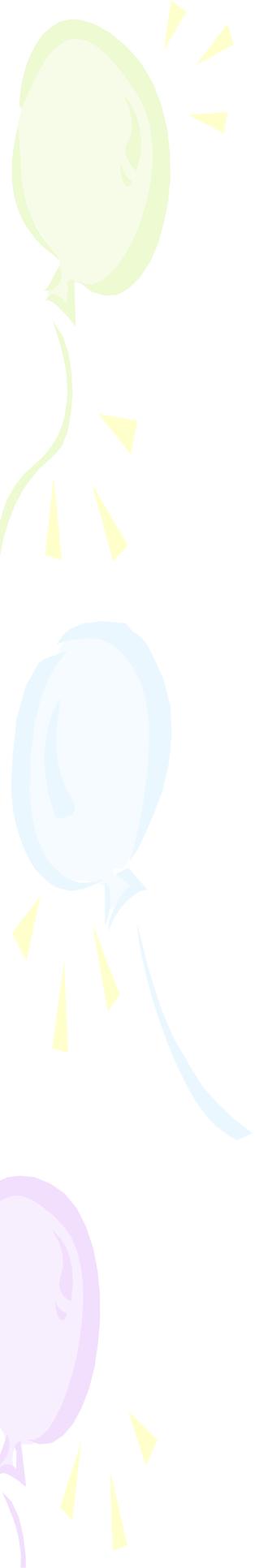


Table of Contents

- Statement of Purpose.....1
- Table of Contents.....2
- Policy Outlines.....3
- Classroom Safety Policy.....4
- General Information.....5
- Sign-In Procedures.....6
- Re: Children's Church.....7,8
- Infant & Toddler Rooms.....9
- Age of Children & Numbers.....10
- Middle & High School Youths.....11
- 6th - 12th Grade Groups.....12-15
- Reporting & Response.....16,17
- Training.....18
- Youth Group: Advisers.....19
- Youth Group: Volunteers.....20
- Prayer for All Youth.....21



Policy Outlines:

- Standards for how we will keep our children safe in the classroom and youth groups.
- Procedures to follow if a parent needs to be located during church service.
- Procedures to follow in case of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building.
- A reporting and response process in the event of an allegation of misconduct.
- We believe that by having a policy that outlines requirements and standard procedures in writing, our parents, teachers, care givers and children will have a common understanding of expectations and will also have peace of mind in knowing that the Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment for our young people.
- Any person who is or wants to be church children's volunteer worker for any age youth group must undergo a back-round check.
- ***We view this as a work in process and have developed this policy with the flexibility to respond to changing needs or circumstances.***



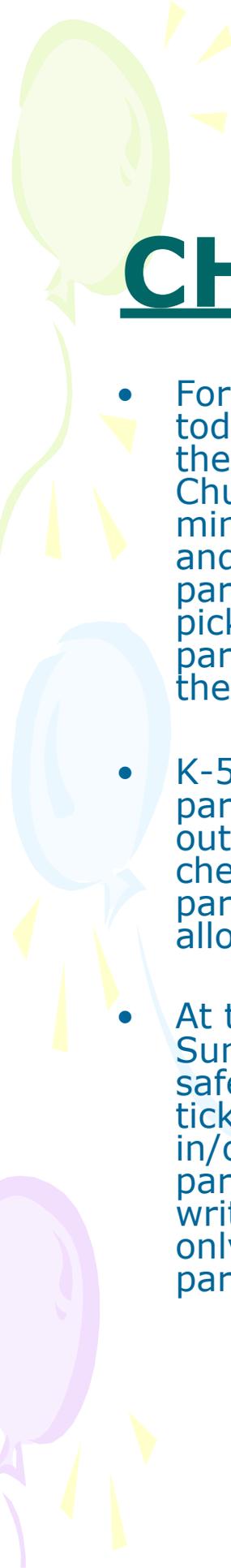
CLASSROOM- CHILD CARE ROOM SAFETY POLICY

- We the MERGE Youth Committee understand that in our present times there is always some security risks of children within our walls. Knowing it is impossible to absolutely eliminate all fathomable risks we seek to minimize that risk and therefore:



GENERAL INFORMATION RE: CHILDREN'S CHURCH

- All spaces where children gather must be easily accessible. Our classroom doors have windows and they shall always remain free of obstruction.
- Generally there will be two adults present in every classroom of children. Back-round checks for every Children's Ministry Teacher will be processed and with the understanding that the mere presence of another adult in the same room should prohibit any questionable behavior and at the very least will prevent or stop it. That second person does not have to be a teacher but can be any selected adult from the congregation.
- No child that has had a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, persistent nasal drainage which is green or yellow in color, or had a communicable disease or unexplained rash within 24 hours be admitted into Children's Church.
- Every attempt will be made to soothe a crying little one. In the event that a child cries inconsolably (15 minutes) the parent will be notified.
- Note: The primary adult must be 18 or older. A secondary adult can be 16 or older. Children's Church workers must adhere to the Constitution and the Bylaws Tenets of Faith in order to be a teacher, adviser, or worker.



CHILDREN'S CHURCH SIGN IN

- Formal registration of students, infants, and toddlers is mandatory. All parents must complete the sign in any day their child is in class. Children's Church Teachers should keep accurate up to the minute sign-in data, which will both assist planning and can be utilized in emergency situations. The parent that signs in the child will be the one that picks up the child (unless the workers know both parents or older siblings and take responsibility for the child's release)
- K-5 children will be released after worship and the parent that will pick up the child, will walk the child out into the hallway and the children's worker will check off the child from the sign in. Once the parent has made that contact the child will be allowed in Children's Church.
- At the end (or anytime) of each class all children on Sunday from 5th grade to infant may leave the safety of the classroom only when the distributed ticket matches the sign up number on the sign in/out list. While inconvenient, we must request parents, or an older sibling, if the parent gives their written ticket, come and follow this procedure. Not only is this safe sense, it should eliminate any parental custodial issues (if they exist).

RE: CHILDREN'S CHURCH

- All classes should be conducted in a positive, respectful and nurturing manner. All students should feel accepted and supported in their class. Any conduct by a student, Teacher or Aid that make any individual uncomfortable should not be permitted. Teachers should not permit any abusive language, racial or ethnic slurs or **any** language that demeans any other person (whether that person is present in the class or not). Teachers should also not permit any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact between anybody in their class.
- If a child becomes ill, begins 'acting out' or is becoming abusive in any manner one of the adults in the classroom will quickly communicate via walkie-talkie for parent(s) to come and pick up their child immediately. The church will flash the child's number across the bottom of the big screen in the auditorium to notify for that parent to go directly to the classroom designated for their child(ren). This is, of course, assuming reasonable measures to calm or correct the uncooperative child has not worked.
- Our goal at The Merge Community is to rely largely on adults to be teachers but we understand that our congregation is blessed with many mature and devoted teenagers who enjoy teaching our children. With that in mind, knowing these youth are not technically old enough to be primary (and in the case of a team secondary) teachers, a Pastor can allow 'qualified' older youth to become Children's Ministry teachers/workers.



RE: CHILDREN'S CHURCH (Age 5-11)

- Children's Church Teacher shall attend to any emergency, as best he or she is able, attempting as best as able to protect the safety of the children and themselves. Should there be any emergency that a Children's Church Teachers is not comfortable in attending to, the teacher should immediately request the assistance of other Teachers or a Pastor not preaching. Parents need to be notified of any injury or health issues concerning their child (parents need to communicate any allergies, or disabilities that may result in any lack of security for their child or other children ahead of time), immediately if necessary, or at the close of Children's Church if appropriate. Children's Church Teachers need to write down and communicate in writing to the Family/Youth Pastor any food allergies, or unique medical issues as parents of those children notify the teachers accordingly.
- All Children's Church Teachers/Workers need to be familiar with the location of the walkie-talkie areas and how this communication device may be utilized for emergency purposes (911) or to communicate to the parents in the main service as quickly as possible.
- All Children's Church Teachers must be familiar with evacuation routes for their classroom. If there is a church wide emergency which requires evacuation of the classes, each teacher will be responsible for the evacuation of their classroom and should direct their class to the designated exit and then to the parking lot. Each Children's Church Teacher should bring their class attendance sheet and should use the attendance sheet to make sure that all children are accounted for. Teachers should be able to check and see if any other Teachers need assistance in evacuating and should attempt to assist them if necessary. **Parents should be made aware that they should not attempt to retrieve their child in an evacuation, but should meet their child and Teacher in the parking lot to assist in taking attendance and ensuring the safety of all our children.**

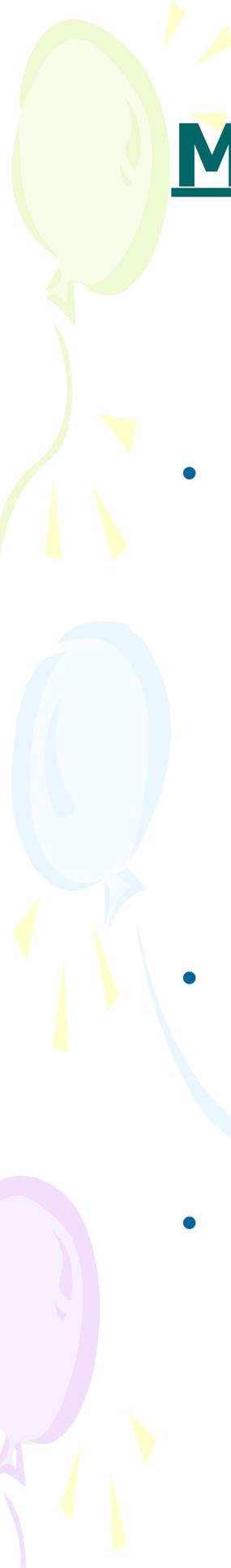
INFANT (1-2) AND TODDLER (2-4.5) ROOM

- Parents must sign their children in (and may require legal identification by the Family-Youth Pastor as necessary).
- Parents must sign their children out at the end of worship service.
- Infants up to 11 months cannot be discharged into the rooms during the services, but parents must attend to their own from birth to 11 months.
- If a designated adult is to pick up a child it must be pre-arranged with the Room Coordinator and the numeric ticket must be presented. The Family Youth Pastor has the authority to refuse the release of any child until the designated person with the ticket arrives (if the ticket is lost, the ticket holder must either be the parent that dropped off the child or contact the parent(s) for their child's release).
- A thorough washing of all workers hands and infant/toddler handled articles of toys is required at the end of class. Check supplies (cookies, Goldfish, wipes, tissues, napkins) & give Pastor Keith list of needs. Changing diapers is to be done by the child's parent. Simply call for the parent(s) over the walkie and the tech/sound booth will run the #number at the bottom of the screen in the auditorium during the service. The parent will come to the nursery and change the diaper. Also see one pager, "Nursery Guidelines" for details.
- The Merge Community Church endeavors to follow the Guidelines of the State of Michigan concerning proper Adult to child ratios. The State of Michigan recommends the following:



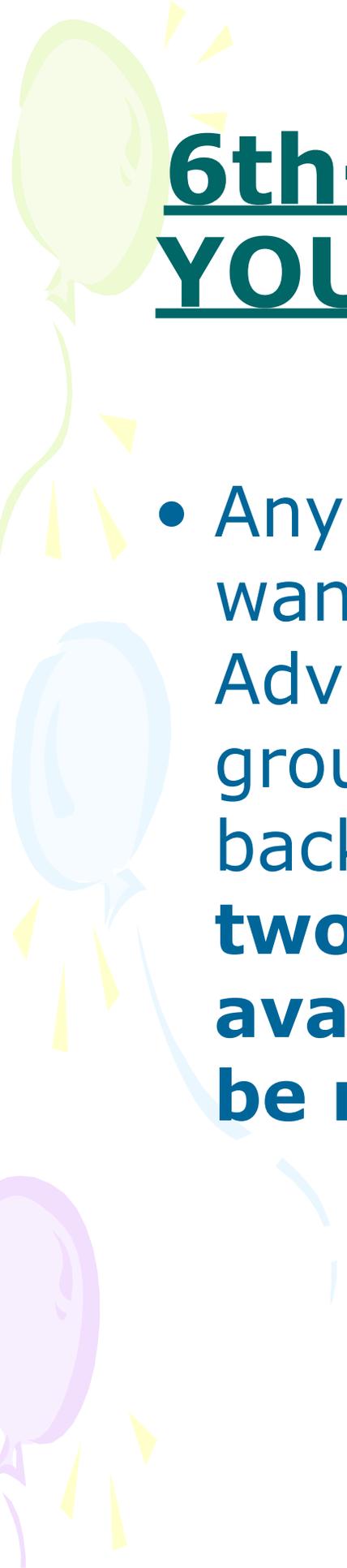
Age of Children/Number of Children/Number of Care Givers

- 2 Yrs-4.5 Yrs.- **5 to 1 Adult**
- 11 Months- 2 Yrs. **5 to 1 Adult and with an additional Aide = 6 to 2.**



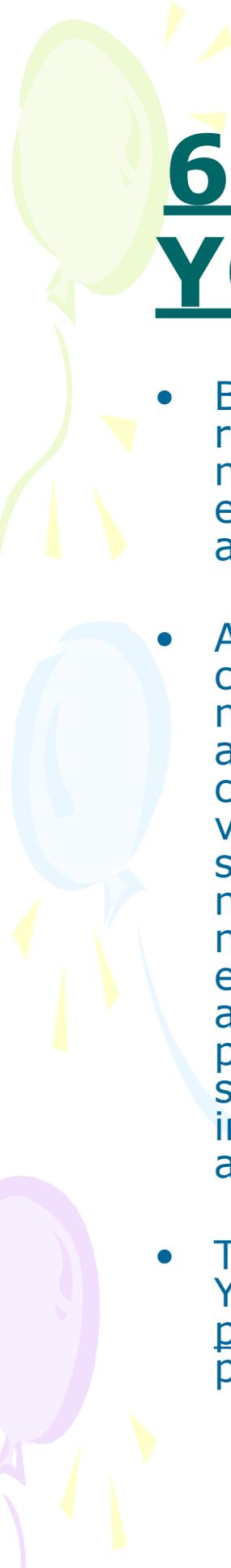
MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUPS

- We value our youth. **The Merge Community Church**, its adult advisors, parents, and staff will make every attempt to ensure youth group activities are safe, nurturing, and responsive to the needs of our children and their families. These are ages where emotional, physical, and sexual developments are hitting new stages. The two adult rule must apply here with very little leeway. Not all youth group meetings keep the group itself in one location, many times the group breaks into smaller activity units and hence it is nearly impossible to insure all teens are under the constant and direct supervision of two adults (advisors). So:
- All youth activities planned by the groups must have two adults to oversee the group. Youth Group overnight trips must have both male and female advisors, unless the trip is all male or all female. (then male to male and female to female supervisors will chaperone, accordingly).
- At least one of the adults must be an adult Advisor.



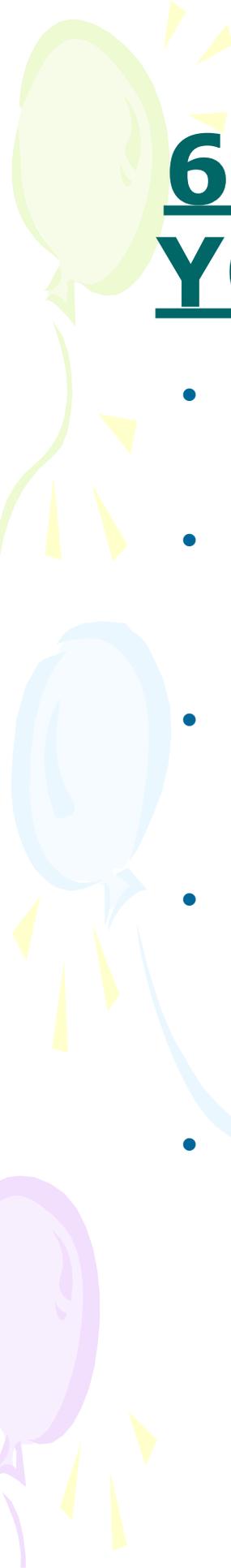
6th-12th GRADE YOUTH GROUPS

- Any person who is or wants to be an Adult Advisor for a youth group must undergo back-round check. **If two adults are not available, there will be no activity!**



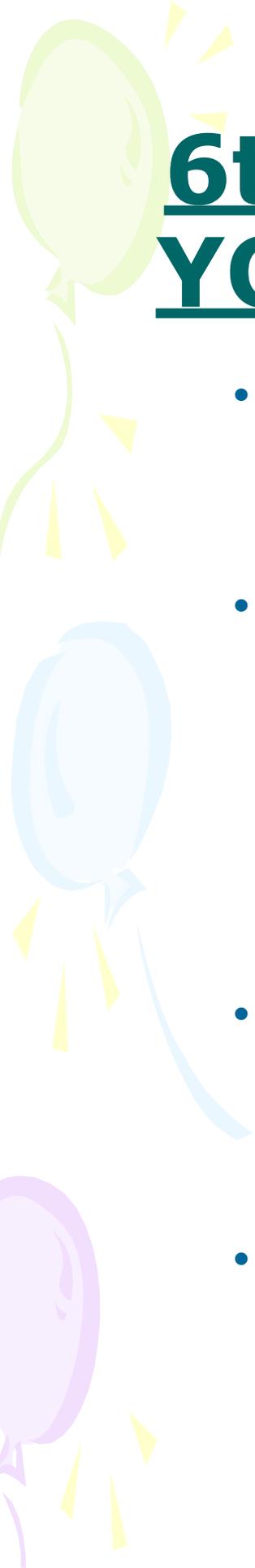
6th-12th GRADE YOUTH GROUPS

- Because of the stringent attendance requirement for the Advisors, they must notify the Family Youth Pastor in time enough so the Pastor can make arrangements for enough supervision.
- All youth group activities should be conducted in a positive, respectful and nurturing manner. Everyone should feel accepted and supported in his or her class. Any conduct by a child, Advisor or volunteer that makes anyone uncomfortable should not be permitted and reported as necessary. Advisors and volunteers should not permit any abusive language, racial or ethnic slurs or **any** language that demeans any other person (whether that person is present or not). Advisors and volunteers should also not permit any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact between anybody attending the event.
- Teens may not drive another teen to regular Youth Group meetings unless both sets of parents consent that this situation is permissible.



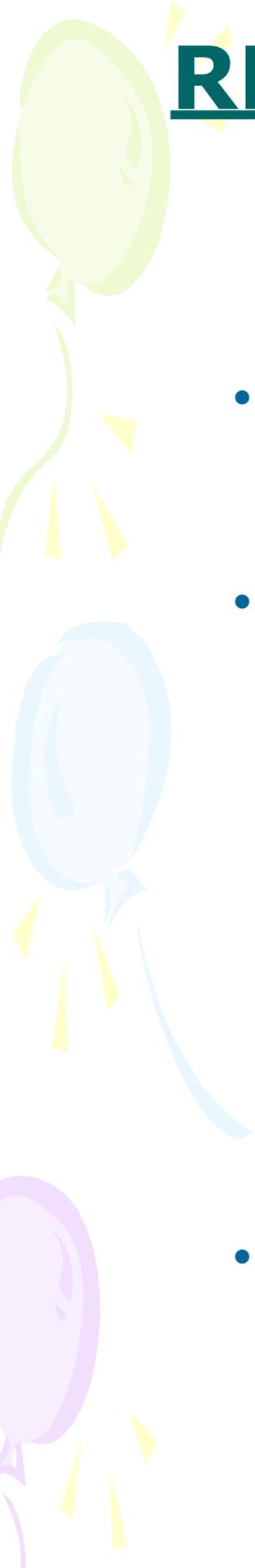
6th-12th GRADE YOUTH GROUPS

- Teenagers driving to and from youth group activities not located at the Church must have parents consent.
- Generally at least 4 adult supervisors/teachers/leaders at any over night event. Chaperone ratios should be 1 chaperone for every 8 teens.
- Any chaperone of an overnight event that is not a regular adviser/teacher/leader needs to fill out a chaperone permission form before any overnight trip.
- At the end of youth group meetings or events advisors/adults must remain (at least 2) behind until all the teens/children have been picked up by parents or left the property. Teens-kids cannot wait on the street for their rides home without a visible adult presence.
- An advisor may stop a child from riding with someone they feel is not qualified-capable of driving the youth group member home. This may be due to an obviously impaired driver or another non youth group member teenager showing up without prior parental consent.



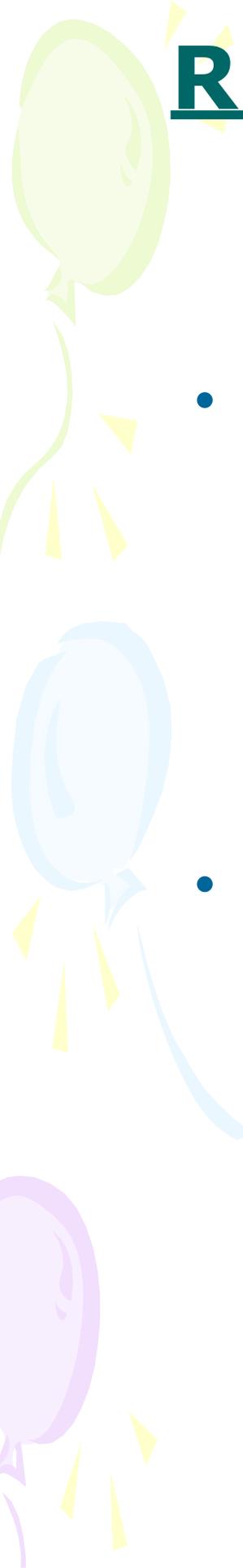
6th-12th GRADE YOUTH GROUPS

- All Youth Groups who are not affiliated with **The Merge Community Church** but are going to be active with **Merge** groups absolutely must follow our safety guidelines while here.
- Medical emergencies are expected to put a strain on the advisor system. When at **The Merge Community Church**, if a teen does not need EMS transport and requires medical attention at least one advisor will safely transport the teen, with at least one other person, to the hospital. The remaining adult/advisor will call the parents to meet them at the hospital. The remaining advisors will remain at the Church until the teens have left.
- Medical emergencies off of **The Merge Community Church** grounds (like on a Mission Trip) will require two advisors accompany the injured teen to medical help. Generally there are always more than 4 advisors on a youth group mission trip.
- If EMS transport is needed an advisor will follow the transport to the hospital and remain with the youth group member until parents arrive or the teen goes home or goes back to the youth group.



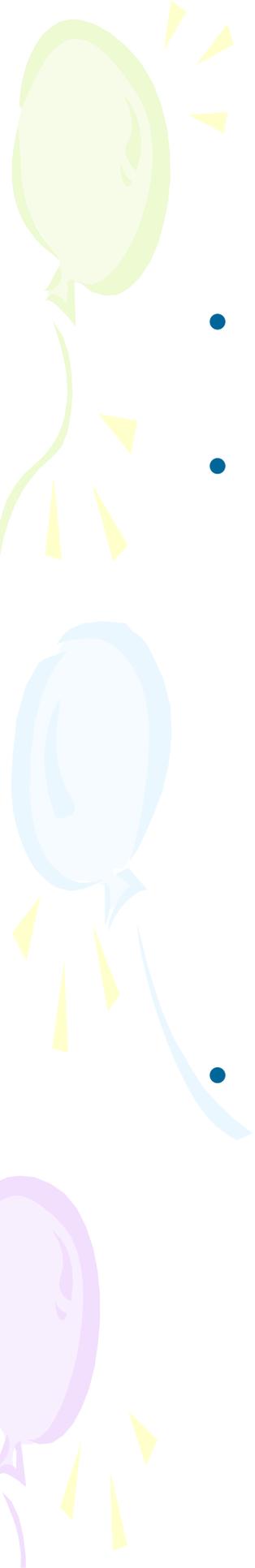
REPORTING AND RESPONSE

- As servants of God and in the Spirit of Christ we are called to react in a sense of compassion, loving concern, and support.
- Michigan law **requires** the reporting of all suspected child abuse or neglect at **The Merge Community Church** or in the child's home - no evidence of the abuse is needed. All volunteers, advisors, and teachers must be aware of the standards for reporting that the State of Michigan has set. The key phrase in the law states, "any reasonable **suspected** abuse" must be reported by the worker, in consultation with the Family Youth Pastor Reporting and is **mandatory**, and good faith reporting of suspicions of abuse or neglect shields the reporting person from any liability as a result.
- Contact: Michigan Division of Children, Youth, and Family: 1-800-942-4357 and notify appropriate Pastors with strict confidentiality, accordingly.



REPORTING AND RESPONSE

- Not all unwanted behaviors warrant the involvement of need of state authorities. Nevertheless, they may require a Merge Community Church response. Other instances of concern may include: inappropriate language, racial or ethnic slurs or **any** language that demeans any other person or any unwanted or inappropriate physical contact between anybody.
- If any individual Teacher or Parent has any concern whatsoever regarding the care or treatment of a child, that person should feel the ability to approach the **The Merge Community Church Family Youth Pastor**, Pastors, or any member of the Youth Team regarding that concern. The information will then flow quickly, and confidentially, to any Pastors. A full investigation will be undertaken, again if necessary, and the implementation of any needed remedy will be implemented.



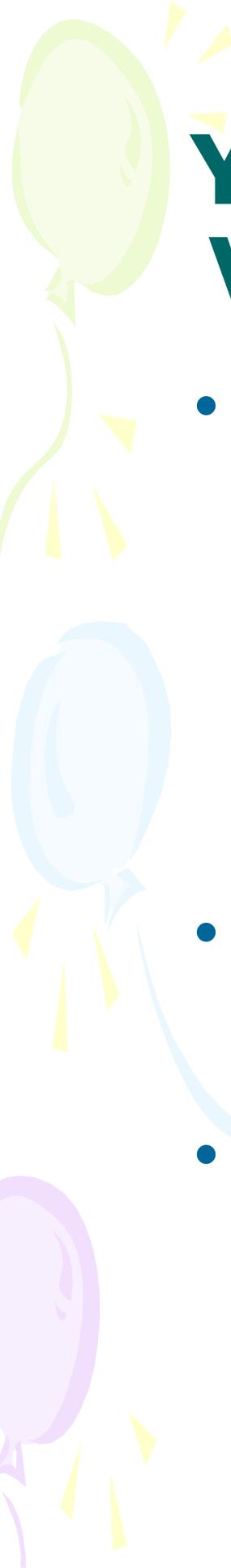
TRAINING

- **The Merge Community Church will train:**
- All Children's Ministry Teachers on this policy at the start of each school year/or as soon as possible. All teachers should be familiar with:
 - a. Standards for Teacher and student conduct in the classroom;
 - b. Standards for reporting of abuse, neglect or other concerns;
 - c. Evacuation, First Aid, and other emergency policies.
- All Children's Ministry Teachers **must** agree to adhere to these policies. Children's Church workers must adhere to the Constitution and the Bylaws Tenets of Faith in order to be a teacher, adviser, or worker.



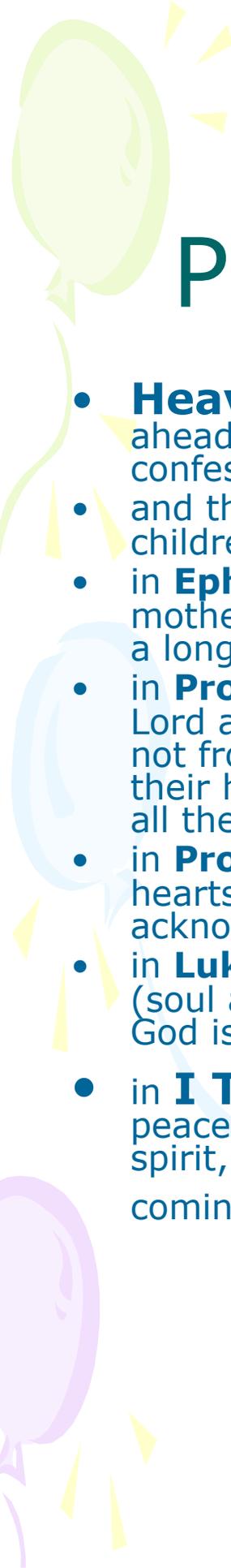
YOUTH GROUP ADVISORS:

- All Youth Group Advisors must agree to undergo necessary background checks.
- While there will be no formal training on these policies for Youth Group Advisors, all Advisors must be familiar with the policies. In particular, all Youth Group Advisors must be familiar with the standards for youth group activities and appropriate conduct.
- All Youth Group Advisors **must** agree to strictly adhere to these policies.



YOUTH GROUP VOLUNTEERS:

- All Youth Group Volunteers will have these policies made available to them and will be requested to be familiar with the policies. In particular, all Youth Group Volunteers shall be familiar with the standards for youth group activities and appropriate conduct.
- All Youth Group Volunteers **must** agree to strictly adhere to these policies.
- All Youth Group Volunteers **must** agree to take direction from Youth Group Advisors regarding these policies.



PRAYER for YOUTH

- **Heavenly Father** we now ask and thank you ahead of time that you hear our prayers and confessions concerning our youth:
- and thus, we pray according to **Col 3:20**, that our children obey their parents in all things, and
- in **Eph 6:2-3** that they honor their fathers and mothers that it will be well with them and they will live a long life, and
- in **Prov 4:20** they pay attention to the words of the Lord and listen to His sayings, that His Word departs not from their eyes and they keep them in the midst of their hearts for they realize they are life and health to all their flesh, and
- in **Prov 3:5-6** they trust in the Lord with all their hearts and lean not to their own understanding, but acknowledge Him and He directs their paths, and
- in **Luke 1:80** they grow and become strong in spirit (soul and body) filled with wisdom and the grace of God is upon them, and lastly
- in **I Thessalonians 5:23** that the very God of peace sanctify them wholly; and that their whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord **Jesus Christ. AMEN!**