

YOUTH MINISTRY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

Jefferson Avenue Church of Christ – Cookeville, TN
Created September 2023



Jefferson Avenue Church of Christ - Cookeville YOUTH MINISTRY (JAYM) JR HIGH/HIGH SCHOOL ***POLICY & PROCEDURE HANDBOOK***



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Philosophy of the Youth Ministry

Purpose & Objective

Jefferson Avenue Church of Christ (JACOC) Youth Ministry (JAYM) exists to aid families in the spiritual, emotional, and physical development of their children to love God, love others, be a disciple of Christ, and make disciples of Christ. We do this by following the mission statement of the church set forth by the elders of JACOC.

The purpose for establishing a Youth Policy is to demonstrate our clear commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of our youth. JACOC also recognizes the need to have a formal, written policy to (1) prevent the occurrence and/or appearance of abuse of our youth, (2) protect our adult volunteers from false accusations and/or suspicions, and (3) protect the spiritual well-being and reputation of the entire church as it continues to glorify God.

Core Values & Expectations

Parents will take the primary responsibility for discipleship of children (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 6:1-4)

- The primary minister in a young person's life is his/her parents/guardians. While it is true that organized church youth ministry is important, its role is not to assume the responsibility God has entrusted to the parents. Therefore, the staff and volunteers of the JAYM will seek to partner with parents/guardians to support them in accomplishing the task God has given them. We will not usurp the parents' role, but come alongside to support, encourage, and love them in this process.

The Word of God will be the foundation of all that we do (2 Tim 4:1-2; James 1:22-24; Psalm 119: 2; Timothy 3:15-17; John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12)

- The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to transform lives. Without the centrality of scripture, ministry loses its focus and, as a result, opportunities for lasting spiritual impact are diminished or lost. Therefore, from start to finish, Scripture will remain foundational and permeate all that we do.

The gospel of Christ will be the primary message. (John 14:1-6; Acts 4:12)

- Games, events, and organized chaos of all kinds are great only when they work to accomplish the ultimate goal- *saving faith in Christ Jesus*. For this reason, all that we do will be designed with salvation and Christ-likeness in mind. JAYM may or may not have/be the most cutting edge and popular ministry in the area, but our first goal is to remain true to the gospel, trusting that God can and will change lives. We're going to have fun, but the gospel of Christ takes the front seat. We will not assume that our young people already have a sufficient understanding of the gospel, but we will urge our students and their friends to obey God's Word as revealed through Christ Jesus & the Holy Spirit.

The church is the body of Christ and the youth ministry will be a part of & submit to the overall design of the church. (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:1-16; Colossians 3:15; Titus 2:6-8; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

- The youth ministry is not a separate church. Youth ministry exists under the umbrella of Christ as the head of the Church and the elders who shepherd the local church. Accordingly, we will teach our youth what the Bible says about their responsibility to the church as a whole and encourage them to be involved in the local church. We will utilize active deacons for support resources and accountability.

Every young person will be encouraged to pursue accountability relationships where they can learn and grow alongside other believers (Luke 6:12-13; Matthew 18:15-20; Phil 3:17; Hebrews 3:13)

- There shouldn't be any "lone ranger" Christians. The Christian life is not to be lived in isolation. God has given believers the Body of Christ as a support system. For this reason we seek to connect our young people to mature believers of JA for the purpose of discipleship and accountability.

JAYM Youth Elder – Don Foy

Primary roles: Youth ministry accountability and shepherding

- Don has been involved in the Jefferson Avenue Youth Ministry since 1987, as a youth deacon from 2007 to 2014 and as an elder since 2014. He and his wife Jane have two daughters who went through the youth program at JA. Don has invested much of his professional career in news media and information technology management. During baseball season you can find Don immersed in everything around his favorite baseball team, the Atlanta Braves.



JAYM Youth Deacon - Mark McCowan

Primary roles: Youth ministry accountability and support

- Mark grew up in the church just down the street from Jefferson Avenue at Sycamore Church of Christ. Today, he is joined at Jefferson Avenue by his wife, Lauren, and four daughters, Lily, Kailee, Elin, and Isla. You're likely to run into the McCowan's at a local softball field, where all four girls play, or at a campground somewhere in the Smokies. Since volunteer coaching and camping don't pay the bills, Mark is a financial advisor at Wilson Bank Investment Services, holding his Certified Public Accountant license and Certified Financial Planner designation. When he's not busy being a girl dad, he enjoys hunting, exercising, and playing bad golf.



JAYM Youth Deacon - Seth Gilbert

Primary roles: Youth ministry accountability and support

- Seth Gilbert, born and raised here at JA! Seth grew up here in the JA Youth, baptized at age 14. He graduated from TTU in 2005 with a degree in business management, thanks to Brook! Seth is an entrepreneur and started a mowing business at the age of 15, which has now expanded and he continues to do. If you ever wonder where he and Brook are, you can probably find them in a gym or field somewhere watching Cara Lee or Callie playing one of their sports. In his free time, you can find him playing golf, working on the farm, on the lake, watching the Minnesota Vikings or Duke Basketball, or hunting.



JAYM Youth Minister

Topher Wiles – primary roles: oversee spiritual development, Biblical teaching, and event planning of JAYM

- ChrisTopher loves his beautiful wife and four wonderful kids. After being inspired by a youth minister to follow Jesus at 16 years old, Topher was baptized into Christ at Smyrna Church of Christ in Smyrna, TN. Topher then received a degree in theology from Lipscomb University with an emphasis in Youth Ministry & Biblical Languages. By God's grace he also served as principal of the local homeschool cooperative, tennis coach of multiple teams, high school math teacher, and a chaplain at a local hospital. Along with 18 years of experience in full time ministry, in 2020 & 2021 he was also voted "Community Role Model" by the public of White County. His special talents include squeezing as much life as he can into every minute, sparring with three boys at one time without anyone being seriously injured, and bringing adventure to anyone who will join him.



II. Youth Protection Policies

Application

This policy is applicable to all individuals having direct contact with the JAYM, including but not limited to: ministers, staff, teachers, volunteers, chaperones, and drivers.

Definitions

Appropriate Displays of Affection from adults toward youth

• Use of appropriate physical contact in a public setting to show support, encouragement and healthy affection toward youth who are receptive to this form of emotional expression is acceptable. However, adults must exercise good judgment and never force any physical contact on any youth. Examples of appropriate displays of affection may include:

- Holding hands during prayers or when a person is upset
- Side-hugs
- Hand-shakes, high-fives, hand slaps and fist bumps
- Verbal praise
- Arms around shoulders
- Pats on the shoulder/back

Inappropriate Displays of Affection from adults toward youth

- Any form of sexual contact or contact perceived as stimulating
- Intimate kissing
- Initiating full frontal hugs
- Massages
- Lying down or sleeping beside youth
- Touching or hugging from behind
- Showing affection in isolated/inappropriate areas such as bedrooms, closets, or private rooms.
- Comments that relate to physique or body development
- Patting on the thigh, knee or leg
- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces



Appropriate discipline

Adults will employ only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage and build self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. Examples of positive discipline include:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
- Reminding youth of behavior expectations by using clear, positive statements
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the youth's age and development.
- Loud yelling/direction should only be used when someone is in immediate physical danger (e.g. walking out into a heavily trafficked road)

Harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment under the guise of discipline is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Guidelines

General

Adults involved in JAYM youth activities must assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear and appropriate physical and emotional boundaries in all youth ministry relationships.

- **Two Adult Rule** – Every attempt should be made for two or more adults are to be present during any JAYM sponsored youth activity. If one-on-one interactions between adults and youth are unavoidable or absolutely necessary, the interaction should occur in an area that is visible to others and with the knowledge of another adult. No youth interns will have sole responsibility for, or be alone with, any youth. Where application of this rule is not possible or practical (e.g. emergencies) a “roaming adult” should be utilized.

- **Proportional Adult Coverage/Supervision** It is recommended that there be a minimum of 1 adult per 10 youth for high school level activities, 1 Adult per 7 youth for middle school age activities. For overnight trips it is recommended that we schedule 1 Adult per 4 youth. Per the two-adult rule, no activity will have less than two adults, preferably one male and one female if mixed gender youth are participating.



Transport (During a Youth Event, Not to and from)

All youth must ride in vehicles driven by authorized adults which must:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Have a valid Tennessee driver's license, qualified for the vehicle being operated.
- Have no record of convictions for the past five years for DUI, driving with a suspended or revoked driver's license or reckless endangerment.
- Have proof of insurance
- Never be alone in a vehicle with a youth other than his/her own child. Therefore, no fewer than three persons, one of them an adult, should occupy a vehicle traveling to/from an activity.
- Ensure vehicles are not filled beyond capacity for their use, that seat belts are always secured
- Must understand emergency contact procedures and maintain contact with the person in charge (e.g., cell phone)
 - If a youth chooses to ride with another minor during a church function explicit consent must be made by the parent of that child to the Youth Minister or ministry representative in charge.

Transport (Before and After Youth Event)

- To remain above reproach, it is our practice to not have volunteers give rides alone to students of the opposite sex. In extenuating circumstances, it is possible that such rides might be reasonably allowed, but only after obtaining the advance knowledge and permission of the parent/guardian. However, this should be a rare exception.
- Students can ride to church or home from church with other students, but this is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to monitor. We cannot be responsible for students before they arrive at a youth activity or after they leave.
- If a youth chooses to ride with another minor after a church function, explicit consent should be made by the parent of that child to the Youth Minister or ministry representative in charge.

Overnight Events

- Care needs to be taken to ensure that there is a clean, safe environment provided for sleeping, showering, bathing, dressing and all other aspects of being away for a period of time. Adults must always respect the privacy of youth and each other. Likewise youth must respect the privacy of adults and each other.
- When the youth group includes both males and females, and stays overnight, both male and female adults must be present. (This also applies to overnight stays at JACOC.)
- Only JAYM and associated church group youth and adults participating in the trip are allowed to stay in the same accommodations.
- Sleeping areas and access to bathroom facilities should be segregated between males and females. Every sleeping unit (hotel room, dorm room, cabin, tent, etc.) should have at least one adult (preferably two) in the same gender as the youth. When only one adult is available, the sleeping unit must have at least two youth of the same gender as the adult. Adults are not allowed to share a bed with a youth unless it is their own child. If necessary, beds may be shared by youth of the same gender. If separate bathroom facilities are not available, times for male and female and youth/adults use should be scheduled and posted prominently.
- When one room is used for sleeping, youth and adults of the opposite gender will sleep an appropriate distance apart as determined by the adult in charge.
- Both youth and adults shall wear appropriate sleeping apparel.
- In booking hotel rooms, reservations should be made, if possible, with all rooms on the same floor or location in the hotel. Adjacent rooms allow for enhanced supervision and safety.
- No youth(s) should be allowed to leave the premises without authorized and appropriate adult supervision.
- Curfews must be established and adhered to by all participants.

Exceptional Situations

- Only under the rarest and most unusual circumstances should an adult be alone in a car, room, or other accommodation with a youth. This might include a case where a youth is ill or in a bona fide medical emergency. In this case, the adult should make every effort to enlist the help of another youth or adult to be present and assist. Note however, the welfare of the youth takes precedence and whatever action is necessary and appropriate must be taken.
- If there is a unique need for an adult to talk with a youth in private, the adult should choose a quiet place that is in plain, public view. Examples of this may include open areas around the church (courtyards or hotel lobbies if on a trip), short walks down a sidewalk, a restaurant, coffee shop, or other location where people are present in the area.
- Adults need to acknowledge that there is potential for sexual abuse and/or harassment by outside parties and must take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all youth.



Arrival and Departure Times

- We will promote a clear departure and an arrival time for most events. We will always strive to return earlier than the stated arrival time, so parents/guardians should be ready to pick kids up by then. Rarely should we be late.
- It's important to us not to waste time waiting for kids to be picked up and it's important to parents/guardians not to have to wait around for us to arrive.
- In the event that we will be 15 minutes late or more due to an unforeseen event—if possible—we will call ahead so parents aren't waiting and wondering.
- Certain local events such as a concert or ball game are uncertain in their ending times. In such cases we will suggest the kids call home when we arrive at church or use cell phones enroute.
- For long-distance trips where the return time may vary depending on road conditions, we will send out emails or other updates via REMIND for parents/guardians to check.

Safety

- Students will generally be required to stay in groups of three or more in all public places (amusement parks, water parks, campgrounds, etc.) They must also be in the vicinity of a chaperone while in their group of three (i.e., in the same building, park or section of a street.)
- We will particularly keep close tabs on Middle School students. Depending on the setting, older students will be given more latitude.
- During events and when transporting students from one location to another, face-to-face attendance taking will be taken often to verify everyone's presence. Parents/Guardians will be notified if students have removed themselves from our activity.

Screening

- Each volunteer is required to complete an application process which includes a personal interview and a criminal background check.
- Each volunteer must be a member of JACOC, have completed a volunteer preparation (Ministry Safe) class or be registered for one, and be at least 21 years of age. Student Interns must be at least 18 years of age and undergo the same screening process.
- Each volunteer must acknowledge and agree with JACOC mission and vision statement and be in good standing with the elders of the church.

PDA

To avoid awkwardness, cliquishness, and distracting from the purpose of our event, we do not allow PDA (public displays of affection) between youth couples. Our trip is not a date; it is a group experience, where we treat each other equally as brothers and sisters.

This means couples may not cuddle, lay on one another, isolate themselves, etc.



Reporting

- Any person, adult or youth, must be ready to safeguard and protect the trust and safety of children and youth. Anyone who has “reason to believe” or evidence that a child/youth is a victim of abuse or neglect has a duty to report. This duty to report is not limited to events or activities at JACOC or under our supervision. A failure to report can be considered a criminal offense and potentially subject to civil liability.
- JACOC understands that appropriate government agencies must respond and investigate reports of abuse/neglect of a child/youth to the Tennessee Department Children Services (DCS). JACOC will at all times fully cooperate with such governmental agencies, and in no way will attempt to interfere in or obstruct such agencies or their investigations.
- If anyone is unsure whether an incident or condition should be reported, they should feel free to discuss the circumstances with the Youth Minister, Deacons, or Elder. Additionally, JACOC asks that if an incident or condition is reported to DCS, that the Youth Minister and Elder be notified of the situation.

Counseling

Bear in mind, Youth Ministry volunteers are not professional counselors.

Consequently, this occasionally poses a significant boundary issue when working with young people. As students begin to trust the Youth Ministry Staff, they will begin to confide in them. Problems arise when a young person confides in a volunteer, expecting them to maintain confidentiality.

Unfortunately, not all counseling issues can remain confidential.

Youth Ministry volunteers are required to report immediately to the Youth Minister if:

- A young person is being abused sexually
- A young person is threatening to hurt him/herself (suicide, cutting, etc)
- A young person is threatening to hurt someone else (homicide, revenge, etc)
- A young person reveals a personal crisis/endangerment (pregnancy, drug abuse addictions, criminal activity, etc).

If any of these situations arise, the Youth Minister will take the appropriate course of action, including the consulting of authorities and/or parents or pursuing professional counseling options. The Youth Minister is available to give counsel and guidance on any issues or concerns that arise.

Because we are dealing with minors, we will use the utmost discretion as to who to involve in various issues. We desire to build trust with our young people, but not to the extent of keeping parents excluded from their child’s life.

Care of Documents

- All information will be treated in a confidential manner, except as required by legal reporting requirements or legal process. Documents will be kept in secure storage available only to those charged in this policy with the responsibilities requiring direct access to information within their purview. This secure storage will house all Screening Forms, Applications, Volunteer Acknowledgement Forms, and any other sensitive information related to youth protection.



Dress Code

- Modesty is of supreme importance and all youth participants should consider their outfits prior to attending any event.
- Clothes with inappropriate messages or images are not permitted.
- When in doubt, don't wear it.

Injury & First Aid

- The Youth Minister for JAYM will be trained in CPR and First-Aid.
- We can administer ONLY basic first aid, in non-life-threatening situations.
- The Youth Minister or chaperoning medical professional can be charged with giving students medication during a youth trip. A note from the parent must accompany the medication noting the Youth Minister as able to distribute medication.

Forms/Releases

- Medical Forms, Insurance Forms, Parental Consent/Permission Slips, Waivers & Releases, Power of Attorney Forms, etc., will be filed, maintained, and secured in the church office.

Financial Coverage Distinctions between Chaperones/Parents/Student Interns

- 1.1 **Chaperones** are needed with an expanded roster of students.
- 1.2 A Chaperone will be classified as someone who is asked by the Youth Minister to participate in an event/trip
- 1.3 To be asked as a Chaperone, specific qualifications for certain trips must be met.
 - Ministry Safe Certified
 - Background Check
- 1.4 Chaperone spots are first available to those who participate regularly with students.
- 1.5 Chaperone expenses are covered by youth budget just the same as a youth group member.
- 2.1 Parents are encouraged to attend youth trips/events, but their trips/events' expenses will not be covered by the church.
- 2.2 A Parent can also be a Chaperone if they meet the criteria of 1.2 & 1.3
- 4.1 Student Interns are those in college who are paid by the church to learn & serve with the youth.
- 4.2 Student Interns must also go through 1.3 to also be a chaperone
- 4.3 Student Interns can be asked to be Chaperones of events and trips and therefore receive benefits of a Chaperone

Financial Aid

- Financial Aid will be considered on a case-by-case basis for sponsoring the cost of a youth member to participate in a specific event.



Weather Cancellations

- If on a school day, we will cancel an event if PCSS (Putnam County School System) has cancelled classes for students.
- If on a weekend or non-school day, we will cancel an event if an Ice or Snow warning has been put in place by the National Weather Association. In the event of Thunderstorm or Tornado warning, those will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- If an Ice or Snow warning is put in place during a Youth event, students will immediately be sent home if the situation is safe to do so.
- As for a Flood Warning, due to the size of our county and the areas with actual rivers, cancellation of a Youth event will be called on a case-by-case basis.

Communication

- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to come and participate in our youth activities at any time.
- The REMIND App/Texting Service is our primary communication vehicle. We have a database of cell phone numbers, and we regularly send out information updates to parents/guardians, students, and/or sponsors. If you choose not to use Remind, the best thing is to find someone who regularly checks Remind and have them give the information to you.
- E-mail will be used for a monthly preview of events scheduled to be sent out the first week of every month using MailChimp.
- Instagram will be used primarily for event announcements and photo sharing. Follow ["@jayouthgroup."](https://www.instagram.com/jayouthgroup/)
- The private Facebook group "[Jefferson Avenue Youth Group](#)" will also be used for event announcements and photo sharing.
- Text messages are also sent to those with cell phones unless they indicate otherwise.
- Announcements in the church Bulletin will be the source for information for those not already on our distribution lists.
- Flyers will often be available for special events on the bulletin board outside the fellowship hall.
- Questions or concerns about our Youth ministry can be directed to Topher Wiles (615-668-6343). Email at topher@jacoc.org



<i>JAYM Web Page</i>	<i>JAYouthGroup Instagram</i>	<i>JAYM Remind (Parents)</i>	<i>JAYM Remind (Youth)</i>
 A standard black and white QR code.	 A standard black and white QR code.	 A standard black and white QR code.	 A standard black and white QR code.

www.jacoc.org/ja-youth
Sign up for monthly emails here!

www.instagram.com/jayouthgroup/

text @jacoc1 to the number 81010

text @jayouth to the number 81010

A Note from Topher on Training and Youth Ministry Together

Micah made his bold and resolute proclamation at the dinner table one Monday night stating, *“Dad, I would like to ride my bike without training wheels tonight.”*

Our youth often look forward to the next rite of passage; that moment that marks a transition from one stage of life to the next. It could be entering middle school, putting on makeup for the first time, receiving a first cell phone, going on a first date, or taking that driver’s test. The striking way my child distinctly made his proclamation let me know this rite of passage needed my full attention and it needed to happen soon. Around the dinner table, the family changed plans for the night intending to see this monumental achievement in the life of this beloved child.



We arrived at the high school parking lot perfectly sloped for coasting at about 7:30pm. That’s right, I said, “coasting.” The act of gliding on a bicycle without pedaling is key to riding a bike and leaning into turns without training wheels. Many parents get frustrated with their children when trying to teach them to ride without training wheels by going straight into pedal power, skipping the coasting and leaning step. A youth ministry friend years ago told me the secret truth to teaching kids to ride a bike, “Just take those troublesome pedals off!”



Gabriel (my eldest son) snagged the 16mm wrench, and we removed pedals while raising the training wheels off the ground. Micah, who’s been pedaling for years on trikes, big wheels, and his “big boy bike” with training wheels, didn’t understand why we removed his pedals and placed his bike at the high end of the parking lot. “Get on and coast down” was the only instruction we gave. Micah studied the situation, looking down at his pedal-less bike then up at the parking lot. His eyes lit up bright as the mental light bulb turned on. With both feet on the asphalt, he kicked forward and began to pick up speed with me jogging along beside.

“Coasting is fun dad,” Micah yelled as he flew down the hill for his fifth time, learning to lean into the turns. After he learned the coast and lean without any incidents, we took the training wheels off completely and put the pedals back on. Micah was a blur of smiles and speed the rest of the night as the entire family cheered him on.

Our goals in the Jefferson Avenue Youth Ministry are much the same as Micah learning to ride a bike. By the combined efforts of parents, elders, deacons, ministers, interns, and volunteers, we will progressively take off the spiritual training wheels for teens in our youth ministry as we strive to support parents in raising youth up into spiritually mature adults. We want them to experience the freedom in Christ that God desires for each of them as they mature. Wise King Solomon shared, ***“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Prov 22:6)*** To enjoy the most freedom in life when we are older, it takes purposeful progressive training when we are younger. Our combined youth ministry efforts will work hard toward their freedom in Christ. Pray for our wisdom, study God’s Word together with us, and partner with parents, volunteers, and church leaders as we care for our beloved youth.

May we find success together as we learn to train our families to enjoy the freedoms God’s abundant life has to offer. So, let’s put our feet on a firm foundation, kick forward on a narrow path, glide and lean into the turns of life, and celebrate together the spiritual milestones in Christ of our Jefferson Avenue Youth Ministry.

Grace and peace in Him,

Christopher R. Wiles



