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Our Mission

“Revealing Christ’s love to all ages through the transforming power of God’s Word.”

HFM Youth Mission

... Loving Teens Toward God

HFM Youth Strategy

... to create environments where students are loved and accepted, and therefore receptive to the transforming message of God’s love.

Measurable Wins for Youth Ministry

How do we know we are on course with our mission and strategy? Here are some of the things we look for (and celebrate when they happen):

1. Students attend youth group or outreach event. (It’s even better when they return a 2nd or 3rd time and beyond!)
2. Students take a major step in their faith (Salvation, Baptism).
3. Students take a Next Step in discipleship (join a Bible Study or small group, participate in worship, prayer, etc).
4. Students take part in personal ministry (serve in an area, invite friends to youth group, stand for their faith, etc).

The Eight Check Points:

The 8 checkpoints is our guide for what we desire students to learn from youth group over the years in which they participate. We believe that teaching these 8 principles will help students take ownership of their faith and help them to live a life that makes an impact for Christ.

In student ministry, we don't want to be doing activities without a goal. We want a purpose behind everything that we do. Therefore, these 8 Checkpoints are used to help us focus during planning meetings and answer the question "WHY." We disregard any activity that does not help us accomplish at least one of these checkpoints.

1 Authentic Faith

... God can be trusted: He will do all He has promised to do. Critical question: Are your students trusting God with the critical areas of their Lives?

2 Spiritual Disciplines

... When you see as God sees, you will do as God says. Critical question: Are your students developing a consistent devotional and prayer life?

3 Moral Boundaries

... Purity paves the way to intimacy. Critical question: Are your students establishing and maintaining godly moral boundaries?

4 Healthy Friendship

... Your friendships determine the direction and quality of your life. Critical question: Are your students establishing healthy friendships and avoiding unhealthy ones?

5 Wise Choices

... Walk wisely. Critical question: Are your students making wise choices in every area of their lives?

Eight Check Points (continued)

6 Ultimate Authority

... Maximum freedom is found under God's authority. Critical question: Are your students submitting to the authorities God has placed over them?

7 Others First

... When you make yourself nothing, you are really something. Critical question: Are your students putting the needs of others ahead of their own?

8 Discovered Identity

... You will live life to the full when you live according to God's designed purpose for your life. Critical question: Are your students discovering their gifts as well as their uniqueness in how God designed them?

Qualifications of a Youth Leader

In order to become a youth leader at the HFM, you must meet the following qualifications. Please take the time to review them before applying.

A youth leader must:

1. Be a follower of Jesus Christ and be growing in your relationship with God.
2. Like students and desire for them to grow in their faith.
3. Attend a HFM worship service for at least 6 months prior to serving, or have a referral from your previous church.
4. Complete a HFM Youth Leader Application with a background check, and agree to have an interview with the youth director or appointed person.
5. Agree to live by and uphold the standards as stated in the HFM Youth Leader Handbook.

Youth Leader Lifestyle Expectations

Faithful: We will seek to live in such a way that our lives are examples of integrity, faithfulness, and love for God, including...

- Keeping God first in our lives.
- Intentionally building healthy relationships, being particularly attentive to our spouse's and childrens' needs.
- Practicing fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness.
- Speaking edifying words and avoiding complaining, gossip, and profanity.
- Consuming alcohol only in moderation and within the limits of the law (e.g., making it our home policy not to serve alcohol to those below the legal drinking age).

Available: We will serve as a part of a youth ministry team by...

- Attending youth leader meetings.
- Participating regularly in youth ministry activities your area of commitment relates to (e.g. Youth Group), and other events as time allows.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before and stay 15 minutes after scheduled meeting times to allow for relationship building.

Respectful to the team, program and leadership.

Teachable: None of us must think we have arrived at infallibility. We must never claim to know-it-all or be unapproachable over matters. Youth ministry is an ever changing process based on the unique individuals involved. We must never claim to have the ONLY way to do God's work of evangelism and discipleship. But we, ourselves, must be willing to change, learn, and grow with the process.

Youth Leader Roles

No one can do everything! But everyone can do something. 1 Peter 4:10 tells us that “as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as stewards of God’s varied grace.” Our goal is to help you find your passion and use it to disciple students and support the ministry. With that in mind, here is an overview of the ministry areas we have. Ministry jobs are positions that team members can take on and specialize in. It doesn’t mean that if you take this position you are stuck in that position forever. These are simply suggestions of responsibilities for people to take on and excel in.

Leadership Roles:

Main Youth Group Leader—assists in the weekly meetings and is responsible for weekly duties as described in the handbook.

Small Group Leader—responsible to shepherd a group of 8-12 students over the course of 1-5 years.

Sunday School Teacher—Responsible for preparing and teaching curriculum to our Sunday morning class at 9:30am.

Event Coordinator—Responsible for planning and coordinating a special event.

Various Youth Group Roles:

Welcoming/Assimilation Team

Audio/Visual Team

Security Team

Helps Team

Youth Worship Director

Game Time Coordinator

Childcare provider

Follow-up Team

Photography

Video Editing

Drama/ Skits

Theme Design/decorations

Childcare provider

Involved From Home:

Prayer Team

Creative Message Team

Snack Team

Web Design

Forms and database entries

Weekly Youth Meeting Leader Responsibilities

Meet students before, during and after group.

Introduce loners to other students.

Nudge students to take next steps in their faith.

Interact deeply with one student.

Serve over a specific area.

Touch appropriately.

Respond to disruptions.

Youth area cleanup.

Tips on Caring for Teens

Changing the youth world happens one student at a time. Students do not connect to programs; they connect to people. The most effective way to influence students is through significant relationships with key people in their lives.

Students need adults who will:

- Love God and live for him.
- Remember their names and care for them.
- Be interested in their lives.
- Take initiative to spend time with them.
- Pray for them.
- Be real.
- Say encouraging words.
- Believe in them.
- Laugh.
- Go to “their world.”
- Share God’s love through personal experience.
- Be consistently involved in their lives.
- Be patient.

Youth Group Rules

These are the basic rules that we use for all youth group events and activities. We expect our leaders to follow these rules as well as help enforce them during our meetings and activities. Please enforce these rules whenever the youth are with you for ministry purposes, whether you are in your home or at the movies or in a small group meeting! Doing so will help us to keep the trust of the parents we are serving.

1. **Safety first.** (We expect you to be safe and not to do anything that could harm yourself or others.)
2. **ObeY the adult leaders at all times.**
3. **Respect others and their property.**
4. **No PDA** ("Couples" are not allowed to kiss, hold hands, embrace, or touch someone else in a romantic manner.)
5. **Modest dress expected.** (No cleavage, midriiffs, and shorts must be to finger-tip length.)
6. **No cell phones during structured programming.**
7. **No inappropriate language or crude/sexual jokes.**
8. **Stay in designated areas.**
9. **Everyone participates.**
10. **Don't bring or use weapons, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, etc.**

The Boundaries

As a member of our ministry team, it is absolutely essential that you practice healthy boundaries with students at all times...for their safety, and for yours. These boundaries exist to protect students from harm and to protect you from false allegations. Keep in mind: while these boundaries apply to your interactions with all students, they are absolutely **INDISPUTABLE** when dealing with students not of your gender.

When meeting with students outside of normal activities:

- All meetings outside of normal youth group events must have approval from parents.
- Always have two adults present whenever possible.
- If a second adult is not available, the leader should notify parents and obtain their permission, meet the student in a public place during the day, and follow any guidelines the parent(s) might have given.
- When counseling the youth, the leader should have an open door policy. The door should remain open and the meeting should occur where there are other adults nearby. In the case of formal counseling where the door needs to be closed, the door should have a window and the leader should remain in view of that window. If this isn't possible, then the meeting should occur in a neutral, public place.
- Uphold all youth group rules with students at all times. (As a youth leader, you are given an automatic level of trust with parents that we do not want to take advantage of.)

Physical Boundaries

Be wise, be wise, be wise! Maintain healthy and safe physical boundaries with students at all times. We highly encourage appropriate physical affirmation with students. However, if you have any questions about what is or is not appropriate, talk to our staff, and always err on the side of caution. Here are some tips regarding touching...

Appropriate displays of affection:

- Side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder, back or head
- Handshakes and high-fives

Inappropriate displays of affection:

- Kisses on the mouth
- Touching (or slapping) bottoms, chests, or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas of a building, such as closets, bathrooms, and other private rooms
- Sharing a bed with a student
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the student or leader

Also inappropriate for two people of opposite sex:

- FULL frontal hugs
- Wrestling
- Piggyback rides
- Tickling
- Any type of massage given by a student to a leader and vice versa
- Touching legs

Verbal Boundaries

Appropriate verbal interaction:

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

Inappropriate verbal interaction:

- Having sexually-oriented conversations about other people or glorifying past experiences (keep conversations ministry focused.)
- Giving compliments that relate to physique or body development.
- Cursing or racist comments
- Crude or sexual jokes
- Making comments meant to shame a student or belittle them.
- Making derogatory remarks about an adult, a youth person, or a person's family.
- Using harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate students.

Sleepovers

NO Co-ed Sleepovers outside of official youth events. Same sex sleepovers must be planned in advance, and parents must give their approval to the leader.

Movies

Any movie with a rating beyond G or PG must be researched prior to gathering, and parental approval must be obtained. Avoid calling parents in front of teens or putting teens on the spot (they may not be comfortable with the movie.) Movie reviews can be found at pluggedin.com or commonsensemedia.org.

Driving Requirements

Any leader who wishes to drive students must:

- Be at least 21 years old (or age 25 to drive a church van.)
- Have a written parental consent form for all official events. Verbal permission from parents is required for any hang-outs/ small group.
- Have a valid state driver's license and be qualified for the vehicle.
- Have no record of convictions for drunk driving, driving under-the influence, or reckless endangerment and must not be driving with a suspended or revoked license.
- Have proof of insurance.
- If driving one of the church vehicles, you must fill out the "driver screening" form and have a copy of your driver's license and proof of insurance on file.

Driving Rules:

- Must obey speed limits and laws.
- Everyone must wear seatbelt.
- When driving students of the opposite sex, there must be a total of three people present.

Fireworks, Firearms, & Weapons

Leaders must not use (in the presence of) or allow students to use any fireworks, firearms, or weapons without WRITTEN parental consent. Any such event must be pre-approved by the youth director and is highly discouraged.

Strike System

Failure to uphold the boundaries stated herein may result in immediate removal from youth ministry. If removal is not necessary, a strike system may be enforced. The first will be a verbal warning, the second a written warning, and finally dismissal will result.

Group Events/Trips

When traveling off site for an event:

- All applicable normal youth group rules apply.
- Students should be assigned to a vehicle, and the driver or another adult passenger is responsible to ensure that they have all of their students present before departing.
- In the vehicles, students must sit in rows with students of the same gender (or by a family member).
- All participants should clean the vehicles upon their return.
- Students must let leaders know of their whereabouts at all times.
- When wandering from the group, students must remain in groups of 2 (same gender) or 3 (mixed gender).
- When traveling out of the normal area of an event, an adult must also be present, and the event coordinator notified.
- Parents should be given a list of leaders and phone numbers to contact, so that student cell phone use can be restricted.

Social Media Policies

When communicating/connecting with students:

- Use methods of communication that leave a record (avoid Snapchat, etc. and never delete any texts, etc.).
- Make sure the parents approve(and make sure you get that approval directly from them yourself.
- Use methods that are appropriate for their age and gender.
- Make sure the content of your texts exalt Christ.

In all of your online posts:

- Be Christ honoring in your communications and demeanor.
- Be respectful of student privacy both in pictures and in what you share (never post a picture of them without their permission.)
- Examine your own profiles for any content that may mislead students.

Keeping Confidence and Reporting

It is part of a youth leader's job to be a listening ear for students that need to open up, but a lot of time the students are afraid of others finding out their secrets. While we do want them to feel safe, we must never promise that we will "never tell." There are situations that we are required to report.

Situations we must report:

- Rape or abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional)
- Neglect
- Suicidal attempts
- Running away from home
- Anytime students are in danger of getting hurt or hurting others
- Parental drug use in the house

Here are some numbers to call:

- Domestic Violence Helpline 1-800-799-7233
- Michigan Suicide and Crisis Hotline 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- Sexual Assault Helpline 1-800-656-4673
- Hillsdale Police Dept (517) 437-6481

If you are not sure and there is no immediate danger, please report these to the youth director.

Grey areas include:

- Sexual experimentation and promiscuity
- Drugs/ alcohol
- Choking, cutting, eating disorders, and other forms of self-abuse are delicate issues.
- Bullying (can be reported to the school anonymously)

If the issue is something beyond your training, the student should be recommended to a professional. Also if they persist in their usage and it becomes a dangerous (not to mention illegal) habit, then the leader should tell the student to inform their parents, or that they will go talk to the parents.

Working WITH Parents

One of our main goals for students is discipleship (helping students make their faith their own). Going to church is a really important part of that discipleship process. But you know what? When it comes to discipleship, church isn't the most important part. We believe that, in any student's life, and especially when their discipleship is concerned, this is true...

THE FAMILY INFLUENCE (ESPECIALLY PARENTS) IS ALWAYS GREATER THAN THE CHURCH'S INFLUENCE.

As youth leaders we are called to support parents in their calling. This support can take various forms, but the key is that it must be support. Parents need to know that we are here to assist them and support them.

This can be difficult because we spend so much time with their students that it is easy to forget the parents and only sympathize with the student. Know this: as much as you think you love students, in almost every case their parents love them far more than we can hold a candle to. In this light, please be very familiar with these **things parents need from youth leaders:**

- Parents need to know the adults that spend time with their teens...you.
- Parents need to know that we will not undermine their authority.
- Parents need your consistent prayers.
- Parents need to have confidence in the advice you will give their student.
- Parents often need to glean from your insight about their teen's world.
- Parents need youth leaders to instill confidence in their ability to be excellent parents.
- Parents need to know that we want them involved with us!