

Relationships Between Youth and Mentors (aka children and adults)

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices, the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

All relationships between a young person and an adult mentor must be kept appropriate at all times.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur.

Adult mentors are prohibited from

- dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
- having sexual contact (touching or exposure of the breast, buttocks or genitalia)
 - with a child or youth
 - with another adult on camp property
- possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.)
 - on camp property
 - in the presence of children or youth
 - except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
- using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on camp property or in the presence of children or youth.
- discussing their own sexual activities
 - including dreams and fantasies
 - discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.

Intimate relationships between an adult mentor and young person are inappropriate and must never occur.

- Suspected intimate relationships must be reported to the Supervisor or clergy person (this isn't to accuse the adult of abuse, but rather to stop appearances, speculation and escalation)

Relationships between an adult mentor and a young person shall be kept public

- **"Secrets" between an adult mentor and a young person is never appropriate**
- **Private communication is not allowed.**
 - This includes texting, messaging, or chatting.
 - If this does occur, you must tell the Supervisor, clergy person, and/or parents as soon as possible

Adult mentors agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth and agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth.

All Adult mentors acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with this policy.

Crushes

Inevitably, young person and adult mentor relationships and crushes come up from time to time. It's important to treat these seriously. Never tease a young person or adult mentor about a relationship or crush. Relationships and crushes are never an appropriate topic of conversation. Adult mentors' personal business should never be discussed in front of young persons. Of course, young person/adult mentor relationships are forbidden.

Young person Crushes on Adult mentors

- Treat these cases seriously.
- Do not tease the young person or the Adult mentor.
- All staff, including the object of affection, should act professionally. Your behavior will help the Adult mentor in question to interact with the young person appropriately.
- Do not encourage either party.
- If it becomes a problem, an adult mentor of the same sex should talk with the young person.
- Crushes on Adult mentors are not an appropriate topic of conversation
- Of course, young person/adult mentor relationships are never OK.

(adapted from the Episcopal Youth Camp – Diocese of Western Michigan)