



REAL LIFE

YOUTH

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

WHO WE ARE

Vision: We will reach the world for Jesus Christ one student at a time.

Mission: We will make biblical disciples who are ready for the world.

Process: We will make disciples who make disciples through our S.C.M.D. Process

- **Share:** We will SHARE Jesus with a dying world, making disciples of all nations.
 - We will share the Gospel, our time, our resources, our gifts, etc.
- **Connect:** We will CONNECT disciples into a leader-directed small group.
 - We will connect students to God and to a community of other believers in small groups, Youth Group, church, etc.
- **Minister:** In small groups we will train disciples to MINISTER in the church, and world.
 - We will minister to students to equip them to follow Jesus and take their next step in their relationship with God.
- **Disciple:** We will release those who have been developed to make DISCIPLES of others.
 - We will continue to walk alongside students in every stage as we encourage them to go out to share, connect, minister, and disciple others (family, friends, classmates, etc.)

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BEING A LEADER

REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING A LEADER

- **Be a disciple of Jesus.** Someone who is committed to following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, on missions with Jesus, and walking this out wherever you live, work, and play. (Matthew 4:19)
- **Be a member** at Real Life Ministries
- **Pass a background check** (Youth specific)
- **Attend weekly services at Real Life Ministries**
- **Belong to a small group/life group**
- **Live a life that is above reproach** in all areas of life including home, work, all relationships (including romantic relationships), social media etc. Be a model to those that you lead both at the church and outside of the church.

2 Corinthians 6:3 "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited."

YOUR ROLE

Ministry Description: Small Group Leader

Prepare	Spend a little time each week familiarizing yourself with the material you're studying with your group (found on our leader websites). Don't forget to pray! Download the Band App --We do all of our communication there.
Lead	Build relationships with your group and utilize the provided curriculum to help your students know and apply the Word of God. Ask questions, facilitate conversation, and stick to guidelines.
Contact	Connect with each of the people in your group on a weekly basis, checking in, and making sure that no one is left behind-- see "Follow-up Action Plan" on page 8.
Pray	Pray with your group each week during group time and for your group during the week.

LEADER EXPECTATIONS

TIME COMMITMENT

We ask that our leaders commit to a small group year that runs from September to June (9 Months).

**We still have Youth Group through the summer, but we adjust what that looks like to be able to give leaders a break for the summer if they would like.*

Weekly Commitment:~ 4 Hours



Prepare - 30 Minutes:

Spend a little time each week preparing.

- **Pray** for your group and your time with them each week.
- Familiarize yourself with the lesson for the week and make a plan for your group time.

Leader Meeting- 30 minutes:

Attend weekly meetings.

- **High School:** Mondays 5:30-6 PM - free pizza
- **Middle School:** Wednesdays 5:15-5:45 PM- free pizza

Youth Group - 2.5 Hours:

Attend the night of your ministry. Connect with your group, be a part of large group, and lead in small group.

- **High School:** Mondays 6-8:30 PM
- **Middle School:** Wednesdays 5:15-8 PM

Follow Up- 30 minutes:

Connect with each of your students on a weekly basis, checking in, and making sure that no one is left behind-- see "Follow-up Action Plan" on page 8.

Additional times-

- Go through the 301 Aligning the Team class once a year. (~3 hours)
- Your ministry lead or lead team member will meet with you for a 1-on-1 meeting two-three times over the small group season.
- We will have a leader retreat that you will be invited to once a year.

As a small group leader, we encourage you to spend time with your group outside of the ministry night, however, this is not required. This can be a 1-on-1 meeting or an event for your whole group.

**If you plan an event for 3 or more students, we ask that you fill out a Leader Led Event form on the leader website to ensure safety and proper due diligence for off-site events.*

(reallifeministries.com/msleader or reallifeministries.com/hsleader)

LEADER EXPECTATIONS

EXPECTATIONS OF SMALL GROUP LEADERS

- Be there consistently to build relationships with students
- Attend weekly leader meetings on program night
- Contact your staff or Lead Team if you are unable to make it to Youth Group
- Follow the student dress code
- Keep conversation between leaders and students both age -appropriate and without gossip
- Avoid keeping secrets -- for students or for leaders Participate in large group (ex: taking part in games/activities with students)
- During Large Group sit together as a small group to help focus your students during this time
- Have the Band App and be a part of the leader chats. This is our main way of getting you the information you need each week.

SOCIAL MEDIA/TEXTING

Within our team, we use many methods to engage and connect students to our ministry. Social Media/texting is one of those methods. For that reason, we need to be mindful of how we portray ourselves on these platforms and make sure we are appropriate. Here are steps to follow when using social media/texting:

1. Dress code--be aware that students are seeing what you post
2. Be above reproach with the use of alcohol on social media
3. Conflicts are resolved in person, not on social media
4. Personal agendas, no matter how right they might be, can divide people. We ask that you keep your agendas to yourself for the purpose of keeping the church unified
5. You must allow the Real Life Ministries Accounts to follow each of your social media accounts (Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, spams, TikTok, etc.)
6. Leaders cannot Snapchat students due to the nature of the app and the lack of safety it can bring
7. The vanish feature on apps cannot be used between leaders and students. With that, messages between leaders and students should never be deleted by the leader
8. Social media/texting should only be used between leaders and students in their small groups, and not with the opposite gender

LEADING SMALL GROUP

WINNING IN SMALL GROUP

If you are trying to go deeper, helping students understand and apply the bible, praying with and for your group, and contacting them regularly outside of group, then you are leading a successful Small Group!

TIPS FOR LEADING

Leading a small group can be challenging with all of the dynamics of people in the group. To help with this we have a few best practices and guidelines that will help small group time go smoother.

7 BEST PRACTICES OF LEADING A SMALL GROUP

1. **Circles over Rows.** Life Change Happens in Circles not Rows.
2. **Take Attendance.** Every student matters.
3. **Go over Guidelines.** They set expectations and create a safe place. These are NOT rules. They GUIDE safe conversations.
4. **Prepare for Group.** Prepare your heart by praying for your students as well as look over the lesson prior to group.
5. **Ask Questions Before Giving Answers.** By asking questions we are helping them process. When we give answers, we are actually stunting their growth.
6. **Fight FOR Relationship.** Relationships are hard and don't always come naturally. We have to fight for them. Look for opportunities to connect with students relationally inside and outside of group.
7. **Celebrate!** What's celebrated gets repeated. When someone takes a next step in their faith journey (even if it seems small), celebrate with them and with your team!

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

At the beginning of every small group, leaders will incorporate these into small group time. Our goal is to reach the world for Jesus, one student at a time--we do this through relational environments. These guidelines help us achieve this

THIS IS A SAFE GROUP We will show respect and honor to those who share and to what is shared within the group. This means no gossiping, slander, or spreading rumors—inside or outside the group. Be mindful of your words and actions so that everyone feels safe and comfortable sharing.

NO CROSSTALK Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations, checking phone, responding to text or email, no scrolling on social media etc.

LISTEN Let's value one another by listening to what is being shared. Allow a pause after someone shares to allow them to finish and others to consider what was said. Eye contact and body posture play key roles in creating a positive or negative group environment.

LEADING SMALL GROUP

NO RESCUING OR FIXING We are not here to fix each other, Jesus does that part. Avoid the tendency to rescue when someone is struggling to get the words out or shares a struggle or conviction.

USE "I" STATEMENTS It's easy to talk about the issues of others or respond with "we", "us", "the church". But for us to grow as disciples and build relationship we want to use "I" statements.

DON'T OVER-TALK We want to create time for all members of the group to participate in the discussion. Be careful not to always be the first responder or regularly give long responses.

FIGHT FOR RELATIONSHIP It's not 'if' conflict or hurt feelings will happen, but 'when'. We commit to fight for relationship with each other. Go to that person and share your struggle or seek wise advice if you are not sure how to handle the conflict.

7 MINISTRY ESSENTIALS

The Seven Essentials are the guardrails that help us stay the course of being a disciple-making church and help us avoid making a wrong turn or go in a different direction. They are a dashboard to help us assess our ministries.



1. ABIDING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

JOHN 15:4-6



2. REACH THE LOST

LUKE 19:10 & MATTHEW 18:12-14



3. CONNECT THE UNCONNECTED

ACTS 2:24-47



4. CHASE THE STRAYS

EZEKIEL 34:4



5. SHEPHERD TOWARDS SPIRITUAL MATURITY

COLOSSIANS 1:28

LEADING SMALL GROUP



6. IDENTIFY, EQUIP & RELEASE LEADERS

EPHESIANS 4:12



7. FUNCTION AS A TEAM

JOHN 17:21-23

FOLLOW UP ACTION PLAN

As stated previously CHASE THE STRAYS is one of our 7 Ministry Essentials. The purpose in this is that every person who has strayed from Christ will be valued, noticed and pursued.

In the Youth Ministries we have a follow up action plan to help us ensure that students don't fall through the cracks when they are missing.

You will see on your weekly small group attendance roster that each student is highlighted a certain color. The color will indicate how many weeks they have been gone. Each week has a follow up action for you to do.

<i>If missed</i> 1 WEEK	LEADER TEXT
<i>If missed</i> 2 WEEKS	POSTCARD
<i>If missed</i> 3 WEEKS	LEADER CALL or TEXT
<i>If missed</i> 4 WEEKS	STAFF CALL or TEXT
<i>If missed</i> 5+ WEEKS	CONTACT QUARTERLY

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Below you will see the expectations that we have for students. We ask that you help keep students accountable to these as well as model in these areas yourself.

YOUTH GROUP RULES (NOT A FULL LIST)

- RESPECT: We will respect ourselves, each other, leaders, this place, and this time.
- No bad language
 - The heart behind monitoring language at Youth Group is to teach respect for God and others.
 - Statements that are made in a disrespectful or derogatory manner will not be tolerated.
- No PDA at Youth Group (this goes for guy/girl, girl/girl, guy/guy)
 - Brief hugs only
 - No sitting on laps
 - No kissing
 - No arm around the shoulder
 - One person per chair
- No cell phones during Small Group and Large Group time
- Students cannot leave Youth Group early without parental permission that is verified by a staff or Lead Team
- Students must use all Youth Group equipment according to its proper use.
- No standing, jumping, or roughhousing on furniture
- Vandalism of church property will not be tolerated
- No guns, knives, or weapons of any sort will be allowed at Youth Group or on the Real Life premises
- No Drugs / Alcohol / Vapes, eCigs, or any other illegal substance will be allowed at Youth Group

DRESS CODE

It is our heart that a student's leader/Lead Team be the one to enforce the dress code directly to them. Our vision is to instill value and worth as we continue to encourage modesty. If you see a student that needs to be talked with about dress code expectations, share the issue with your staff contact or Lead Team.

- Shorts must have a least a 3-inch inseam
- Bra straps should not be showing under tank tops and should not be visible under clothing or when bending over (no see-through shirts)
- Underwear should not be seen through jeggings/leggings when standing or bending over
- No plunging necklines
- Midriffs should not be showing
- Unless there's a youth group theme night that would include the following, masks (medical face masks are allowed) / costumes and costume accessories/face paint / and onesies are prohibited

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

YOUTH GROUP DISCIPLINARY OUTLINE

Our heart: Our ministry exists to help students grow toward spiritual maturity in relational environments. Our discipline process is to help create those relational environments where safety is sought after and respect is expected. Through this whole disciplinary process, fighting for relationship is the goal so we will need to speak with respect, communicate clearly, and take a relational approach to follow up as well.

Disruptive/Disrespectful Behavior:

- Disruptive/disrespectful behavior is defined as any continued conduct in a group environment that pulls other students away from focusing on the group discussion or notable lack of respect for leader, other students, or church property. For this behavior, a three strike policy (noted below) will be employed. Upon the third strike, the student's parents will be called and they'll be sent home for the night.
- If a student is sent home three times in a month (previous four weeks), they will be suspended and return to Youth Group is contingent on them meeting with staff or Lead Team members.
 - It's a lot easier to suspend for this if you've already contacted the parents previously so they know there's an ongoing challenge.
- If they are sent home upon return from suspension, they will be suspended again and return to Youth Group is contingent on them meeting with staff or Lead Team members.

Suspension duration will extend in consideration of repeated infractions and/or their spirit upon confrontation.

THREE STRIKE POLICY

- **Strike One**
 - Verbal warning
 - Using language like "You weren't respectful... this is your first warning."
- **Strike Two**
 - Stepped out for a conversation with Lead Team or staff
 - Using language like "This is the second instance... if this continues, our next conversation will be sending you home."
- **Strike Three**
 - Conversation with a Lead Team or staff to tell them we're sending them home
 - Call parents to inform them to pick up their student
 - Tell parent and student about next step of needing to set up a conversation with Ministry Lead or Lead Team

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR

Anytime a student is being challenged to grow, a conflict can arise. This could take place during small group, or when being confronted for behavior, etc. There are several factors to keep in mind when dealing with conflict between a student and a leader:

- o Don't be alone with the student and have your conversation out in the open
- o Invite Lead Team into the conversation when necessary
- o Never physically touch a student during conflict
- o Always keep your staff or Lead Team in the loop when dealing with conflict

These guidelines are in place to protect you, the leader, from false accusations.

ABC'S FOR RECONCILIATION

Our mission is to reach the world for Jesus one student at a time. We do this through relationships with both Jesus and each other. In order to reconcile relationships and achieve this as a team, we have a few steps in place:

1. **AFFIRM** - remind students that we are glad they are here with us
2. **BEHAVIOR** - explain to students that their behavior is not appropriate
3. **CONSEQUENCE** - give them the consequence to correct the behavior

If you have applied these ABC's once and are needing to reinforce them a second time, the next step is to invite staff or a Lead Team member to assist you.

SENDING STUDENTS OUT OF SMALL GROUP

Our goal in small groups is to keep students connected and engaged. Sometimes there are students who need to be removed from small group for a period of time in order to learn how to be a part of the group. Follow these guidelines when kicking a student out of small group:

1. Set clear expectations and consequences for these expectations.
 1. Example: A student is unwilling to follow the cell phone expectation during small group; you state that cell phones are to be put away until the end. If the student continues to not follow, they will be given a strike. If it continues you will send them out of small group. If they put it away, they may continue in small group.
2. Use the ABC method when dealing with a difficult student/situation.
 1. AFFIRM - I am glad you are here
 2. BEHAVIOR - It is our policy that phones are put away during small group time
 3. CONSEQUENCE - I'm going to ask you to put your phone away please
3. Notify your Lead Team that you have sent a student out of small group and they will come and talk with the student.

SPECIAL SCENARIOS

TRANSGENDER SCENARIOS

We recognize that we will have transgender students in our ministry. They are welcomed and loved but not affirmed in their belief that they were created/are the opposite gender. We will speak truth in love when it comes to this.

- **Small Group:** They attend the small group of their biological sex
- **Gender Divided Activities:** They participate with their biological sex
- **Bathrooms:** They will use the bathroom of their biological gender or the family bathroom
- **Pronouns:** We choose not to call students by a pronoun that does not align with their biological gender. This is because it could look like (to them or other students) that we are condoning their actions and that we support them in their decision to be transgender
- **Nicknames/Changing Names:** We will call students by their legal name.

Gender Identity, Sexuality, and LGBT Movement in Small Group

When these topics come up in small group and the lesson is not specifically directed to this, you will need to follow these steps below. In this, our heart is to affirm students that we are glad they are with us and to share with them the truth we believe. We treat this the same as we do any other sin.

1. Represent a Biblical worldview that God created two genders that are identified from birth and are designed to be in a heterosexual relationship with one man and one woman
2. Let the student know that small group time is not for diving into these topics but that they can be talked about further 1-on-1 with a staff member and you as the leader
3. Follow up with a Lead Team or staff member after small group time and let them know about the conversation that took place
4. For a helpful resource read Understanding Homosexuality and Irreversible damage

SPECIAL SCENARIOS

PHYSICAL/SEXUAL ABUSE

We take both physical and sexual abuse very seriously and desire that every situation would be handled with the utmost care and sensitivity. For that to happen, the following procedures need to take place.

ABUSE RESPONSE

With the sensitive and serious nature that comes with abuse, small group time is not the place we want students to share these personal situations. You can do one of the following:

1. Ask the student if they are able to stay afterwards to talk about it in more detail
2. Release your small group 10 minutes early to discuss with that student in more detail
3. If you have 2 leaders in the group, 1 leader can step out of the room to talk privately with them, as the other continues to lead the group

YOUR RESPONSE AS A LEADER

1. Listen to the student and allow them to unpack their pain/hurt. Don't try to fix them.
2. Ask great questions such as these:
 1. Have you told anyone else about this?
 2. When did the abuse last take place?
 3. Do you feel like you are in immediate danger?

NEXT STEPS FOR ABUSIVE SITUATIONS

1. Notify your direct staff contact or lead team member ASAP
 1. Every accusation of abuse must be communicated to staff or lead team immediately and before the student leaves youth group.
 2. If you are with a student outside of youth group and they share with you that they are being abused, contact your staff or lead team that day.

SUICIDE & SELF HARM

We believe it is healthy for students to talk about suicide and self-harm within the safety net of small groups.

YOUR RESPONSE AS A LEADER

1. Listen to the student and allow them to unpack their pain and hurt. Don't try to fix them.
2. Ask great questions such as these:
 1. Are you having suicidal thoughts?
 2. Have you told your parents about this?
 3. Do you have a plan to hurt yourself?

SPECIAL SCENARIOS

SUICIDE & SELF HARM CONTINUED

KEEP IN MIND

- Self-manage your own emotions and responses
 - How am I reacting vs responding?
 - Am I staying calm or freaking out?
 - Am I asking questions or demanding responses?
- Affirm the individual and your care for them (the ABC's)
- No shame language (ie – “you’re a Christian, you shouldn’t think that way or do that” etc.)
- Remind them temptation is normal and part of the Christian life. We have a spiritual enemy that puts thoughts in our head. Nothing is wrong with you. It is normal to feel bad or shame for our temptations, but talking about them, sharing and PRAYING breaks the power of the temptation. (1 Jn 1:7; James 5:16)

Here is a scale that can help you assess where the student is at as you ask questions:

INDICATORS	NEXT STEPS
• This student is comfortable with the subject matter and does NOT mention or display any evidence of self-harm or suicidal thoughts or they DID (past tense – meaning 2+ years ago).	• No action required but feel free to connect with Lead Team/Staff if needed
• This student mentions very FEW times of struggling with THOUGHTS of self-harm or suicide and very few incidents of actually cutting or self-harming (current to within last 2 years)	• Ask / Encourage them to share with their parents / other caring adults • Apprise Lead Team or Staff of conversation
• This student mentions and has evidence of FREQUENT self-harm and suicidal thoughts	• Apprise Lead Team (Lead Team will share with staff) so parents can be contacted
• This student has a thought out plan to attempt to end their life and the means necessary.	• Notify Lead Team IMMEDIATELY following group (Lead Team will share with staff and staff will connect with parents) so either parents or police can escort to KBH (Kootenai Behavior Health) • We don't want them to leave the building until we have a plan that ensures their safety – Mobile Crisis Unit may be contacted (208-769-2730)



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YOUTH

LEADER RESOURCES

MIDDLE SCHOOL: [REALLIFEMINISTRIES.COM/MSLEADER](https://reallifeministries.com/msleader)

HIGH SCHOOL: [REALLIFEMINISTRIES.COM/HSLEADER](https://reallifeministries.com/hsleader)