



Youth Policies

for Events Sponsored by the
Great River Region
of the Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

We are the Great River Region, a movement that empowers Disciples congregations (and youth) to transform the world through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
We REACH, TEACH, and TRANSFORM LIVES through Christ's love.



Youth Policies

for Events Sponsored by the Great River Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Adopted 11/2/2024

Revised 11/8/2025

**We are the Great River Region, a movement that empowers Disciples congregations
(and youth) to transform the world through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
We REACH, TEACH, and TRANSFORM LIVES through Christ's love.**

Table of Contents

Community Life Policy	Page 1
Consequences for Offenses	Page 1
Dress Code for Youth Events	Page 1
Bullying Policy	Page 2
Drug Policy	Page 2
Medication Policy	Page 2
Smoking, Vaping, Tobacco Products	Page 2
Illegal Substances Policy	Page 3
Weapons Policy	Page 4
Electronic Devices Policy	Page 4
Transportation Policy	Page 4
Water Policy	Page 4
Hike	Page 5
Vandalism	Page 5
Cabin Policy	Page 5
Adult Policy	Page 5
Safe Conduct Policy	Page 5
Adult / Youth Ratio	Page 5
Volunteer Requirements	Page 6
Application and Screening	Page 6
Reporting Procedures	Page 6
General Supervising Procedures	Page 6
Acknowledgement and Agreement	Page 7

Community Life Policy

Great River Region (GRR) Youth Events are part of the ministry of the Great River Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. We host these events to promote our mission and vision statements. Youth events are a way to help teach our youth how to lead a Christian lifestyle, affirm spiritual gifts and empower each person to work with their individual gifts in the larger community.

GRR Youth Events are designed to be inclusive of all individuals. Handicapped accessibility is based upon the facilities we utilize. No particular group or constituency will be given special privileges that are exclusive of the total community. GRR Youth Events are to promote a community that fosters Christian moral, ethical and behavioral standards for all to follow.

Activities, (either pre-planned, traditional, or spontaneous) that exclude, discriminate or haze any individual or that encourage inappropriate, suggestive or sexual behavior are not acceptable at any regionally sponsored youth event.

Activities which recognize and celebrate gifts and achievements will be coordinated by the event director.

Consequences for Offenses

1st Offense: the youth participant will receive a verbal warning.

2nd Offense: A leader will pull the youth participant aside to discuss the offense. The youth will write letters of apology to the region, your host congregation, and the camp director before you will be allowed to attend a future GRR Youth Event.

3rd Offense: A leader will pull the youth aside and ask him/her to call his/her parents. The youth participant will explain why he/she is calling (i.e., what actions got them into trouble) and we may ask the youth to be picked up immediately.

4th Offense: A leader will call the parent/guardian and ask that they pick up their youth immediately.

The consequences of not abiding by the rules of the community could include:

Restriction of free time or recreational activities.

Special duties include cleaning up or preparing.

Consequences which fit the situation in the judgment of the directors.

All consequences will be reported to the GRR Staff, director, and the camper's parents/guardians.

The exceptions to this list of consequences are listed under the Illegal Substances and Weapons Policies.

Dress Code for Youth Events

The GRR Youth dress code encourages respect for authority, prevents disruption, and avoids safety hazards. Clothing should be appropriate for youth events and the following modes of dress are **prohibited**:

- Clothing, including tee shirts, which displays sex, violence, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, death, gang or hate slogans or pictures of anything rude, lewd or mean-spirited
- Underwear as outerwear, exposed underwear
- Clothing that exposes cleavage such as "hip-hugger" pants, crop tops, bandanas as tops, or low-cut blouses for both male and female youth and adults
- Thong swimsuits, tiny or "string" bikinis
- Male campers should wear shirts in all common areas
- Open-toe shoes after dark or bare feet anytime except for at the pool or in the dorms

Enforcement and interpretation of the dress code will be at the director's discretion.

Bullying Policy

The Great River Region Youth Events are committed to protecting campers and staff from bullying, harassment, or discrimination for any reason and of any type. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated at any regional event. All youth and adult volunteers are entitled to a safe, equitable, and harassment-free experience. Bullying, harassment, or discrimination will not be tolerated.

Bullying is defined as when a person is exposed, repeatedly to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has trouble defending him or herself and suffers systematically and chronically, and/or inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress. It is further defined as: unwanted purposeful written, verbal, nonverbal or physical behavior, including but not limited to any threatening, insulting or dehumanizing gesture, that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment or cause long term damage; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individuals performance or participation, is carried out repeatedly and is often characterized by an imbalance of power.

We understand that some people with autism will have behaviors that could fit into these categories but are not bullying. The behaviors will be considered bullying when there is obvious intention behind the actions, and/or when it affects a person or group of people to the point that their experience is being affected negatively. The GRR Youth Commission and GRR Youth Event Director will make every effort to remedy the situation so that all campers can enjoy their experience, but after reasonable attempts at a remedy, if the situation continues, camper(s) may be sent home.

Bullying may involve, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted teasing
- Threatening or threatening gestures
- Intimidating
- Stalking
- Cyberstalking
- Cyberbullying
- Physical violence
- Theft
- Sexual, religious or racial harassment
- Public humiliation or unwanted teasing or name calling
- Destruction of property (camp or personal)
- Social exclusion, inducing incitement and/or coercion
- Rumor or spreading of falsehoods
- Non-Verbal behaviors that can include staring, leering, or graphic images

Participants and staff will conduct themselves according to this policy. All camp directors and adult sponsors are required to investigate any allegations of bullying or violation of this policy and report it to the regional representative.

Drug Policy

Medication Policy

Any medications that are taken at GRR Youth Events should be distributed by the designated individual (camp nurse or GRR designee). All medications will be collected at the arrival to the event and kept in a locked box or refrigerator if that is required. All medications will be in original prescription or OTC bottles/ packaging and dosage requirements will be completed on the registration form for the camper. Adult sponsors may keep their own medications but should take steps to insure they are kept away from youth participants. A supply of OTC medications including skin cream, Pepto Bismol, Ibuprofen, and Tylenol will be kept by the designee and administered with permission per registration forms.

Smoking, Vaping, Tobacco Products

All youth camps, conferences, and retreats are non-smoking/no tobacco product events both for youth and adult volunteers. This includes electronic cigarettes or vaping. Realizing that this may prohibit participation for some, the use of nicotine gum or patches by campers will be allowed only when administered by the camp nurse. Those wishing to use nicotine gum or patches while at camp must supply the approved product to the camp nurse, who will dispense it to the participant. If a participant is under the age of 18, nicotine gum or patches will only be given by the camp nurse with the parent/guardian's permission, as noted on the participant's health form. Those who use unapproved nicotine gum, patches, or other products or who smoke or vape will be asked to turn over the unapproved products. Parents and guardians will be notified, and they may be asked to leave the event.

Illegal Substances Policy

Zero Tolerance! Any individual who possesses any type of illegal narcotic, inhalant, or prescription medication (which is misused) at camp will be reported to the local police department and will be sent home following any legal action which may be taken (i.e., arrest, detention, etc.)

What should be done if directors/counselors find drugs at a youth event?

Leave the drugs where they are found. Do not pick them up or move them. Secure the cabin or room in which they are found until the local police arrive. A director should involve another director, and a counselor should tell a director. It is always better to have at least two adults aware of any type of legal situation. Call the local police immediately. When the police arrive, follow their lead. It does not matter if you know whether or not the substance that you find is really an illegal narcotic or what type you think it is. If you even think the substance is some type of drug, this procedure should be followed. The regional representative must also be informed.

What should be done if a suspicion that drugs are at youth event arises?

Share your suspicions or information with the camp director or another staff person and follow up on the suspicion. If it is based on a rumor, find out where it came from and talk to that person or those people. The director or staff will decide what action to take. You may want to approach the individual(s) who are suspected, or you may want to search belongings. This decision should probably depend on the reliability of the information that led to the suspicion in the first place.

Can campers' belongings be searched legally for drugs?

Yes. The situation is similar to students in public school. They have a reduced expectation of privacy at school; hence, locker searches. Since a GRR Youth Event is a Regionally sponsored activity, there is no state action that can be taken. In other words, the Constitution technically does not apply, and youth cannot legally rely on any Fourth Amendment protections that would apply elsewhere. Although we can legally search belongings for any reason, that would obviously be bad practice. Two or more adults in a responsibility role would be present to search based on any reasonable suspicion that drugs are present at camp. That can be limited to the belongings of one camper or expand to the entire camp. That decision should be made based on the nature of the suspicion.

How do we respond to campers talking about drugs?

This depends on whether the campers are talking about possessing or using drugs at camp or just talking about drugs in general. If campers are talking about having or using drugs at the event, that should be followed up on as a suspicion. If youth are talking about drugs in general, or using drugs at home, perhaps that should be discussed in a small group setting or one-on-one with a counselor or director. There is no legal obligation to report anyone for just talking about prior drug use or possession.

How can we identify what specific drugs are?

As stated above, it is not necessary to identify the drug. Some drugs can be confused for other drugs. Some general descriptions are:

- **Marijuana:** green or brownish leafy substance, may contain seeds, has a very distinct odor. May also be in the form of a blunt, which is marijuana rolled up in cigar type form.
- **Cocaine:** white or off-white powder. Looks like sugar or sometimes detergent. Usually carried in small plastic baggies or pill bottles.
- **Crack cocaine:** powder cocaine that has been cooked with a cutting agent. In rock or patty form. Usually off-white or yellowish.
- **Methamphetamine:** usually an off-white or yellowish powder substance. Can also be in liquid form. Has a very distinct pungent odor. It is a nasty smell that you can always identify once you have smelled it.
- **Black Tar Heroin:** starts out in big black chunks that look like charcoal. Run through a coffee grinder for personal consumption.
- **Prescription Medication:** any variety of prescription medication in pill, capsule, or ground into powder form, either in or without a prescription bottle. Campers should not have prescription or over the counter medication in their possession. All medication is to be turned in to the camp nurse, this includes Tylenol, Advil, etc. (Possession of "over the counter" medication does not constitute criminal action.) Asthma Respirators must be checked in with the camp nurse but can be carried by the camper.
- **Inhalants:** Inhalants include any toxic substance that can be ingested through the nose or mouth. Common substances used as inhalants include: glue, paint, paint thinner, cleaning solvents, aerosol substances etc.

Weapons Policy

What constitutes a weapon?

The following are considered weapons:

Clubs: including, but not limited to, blackjack, nightstick, mace, tomahawk

Explosive weapons: bomb, grenade, mine, etc.

Firearms

Firearm silencers

Knives, throwing star, dagger, Bowie knife, sword, spear, switchblade knife

Brass Knuckles

Machine gun

Armor-piercing ammunition

Zip gun

Pepper spray or mace

“Leatherman’s” multi-tools

Laser pointers

What should be done if weapons are found at camp?

It depends on what type of weapon it is. If it is a prohibited weapon or a gun, the local police should be notified. If it is a knife, other than a switchblade, or other weapon that is not listed, it could be left to the director's discretion. All weapons not reported to the police must be confiscated, and the area, parent/ guardian, and church must be notified. If appropriate, confiscated weapons may be returned to a responsible adult at the end of the event.

What if there is a suspicion of weapons at camp?

The same procedure could and should be used as if the suspicion were of illegal drugs. However, due to the dangerous nature of most weapons, it is imperative that a suspicion of a weapon be resolved to the satisfaction of the director.

Knowing a weapon could be at camp and not following up on the situation is an invitation to a lawsuit.

Can campers' belongings be searched for weapons?

Yes. For the same reasons that they can be searched for illegal drugs. Cabins, rooms, belongings, etc. can be searched, if necessary.

Electronic Devices Policy

Sponsors may ask participants to place devices on silent and put them in a basket, left in the cabin, or on the table during times when focus is needed. Campers may take photos while at camp but may not post photos on social media sites.

Permission to publish photos is a part of the registration process and published photos should only come from the GRR director, employees, or adult youth sponsors with permissions within their youth groups.

Transportation Policy

We discourage youth from driving themselves to camp. Insurance will not cover any participants while en route to the event. Parents and churches should arrange transportation for their youth. Youth participants who drive themselves to an event will be asked to turn their keys in to the director, and they will not be returned until the close of the event. Young Adults Over 18 are allowed to drive themselves to events. The event begins when the young adults arrive. The event insurance does not cover them while they are driving.

Water Policy

GRR Youth Events involving youth swimming or boating in bodies of water will have a certified lifeguard on duty. Events may be near bodies of water, such as by a lake or river, without the need for a lifeguard if no swimming or boating is allowed. Certified lifeguards will be in place if youth are actively swimming or boating, including canoes and kayaks. Youth will be required to have written permission to be involved in swimming or boating activities. Parents and guardians will also provide permission to swim without a life jacket. Life jackets are required in boats, canoes, and kayaks for all youth 12 years of age and under as required by law.

When an event is held near a body of water, youth will not be permitted to go near the water without direct adult supervision. This will be true when swimming and boating are and are not allowed.

Hike Policy

Youth may sometimes hike or take trips outside the 'event space.' When hiking, youth will travel to and from the destination in the exact vehicle with the same sponsors. The lead adult sponsor will carry first aid kits. A sponsor will be at the group's rear, and all youth participants must stay between the lead and rear adults. Swimming while on the hike may only occur with written permission on registration forms and when a certified lifeguard is on the hike.

Vandalism

If any vandalism of property at a youth event is discovered, the camp director and GRR Representative will be informed. If the vandal is known, parents/guardians will be notified and held responsible for the restitution of any damages.

Cabin Policy

There will be only one individual per bed. Females are not allowed in the male dorms/rooms/cabins/restrooms, and vice versa.

Adult Policy

All adult sponsors will have a background check every three years to participate in GRR Youth Events. Adult sponsors will attend a pre-event training session to review Youth Policies and any event-specific items. These meetings will be held via Zoom within two weeks of the event.

Adults should never be alone with a camper. A rule of three should be in place where there are at least two adults with a youth or two youths with an adult. If a private conversation is needed, stay within the eyesight of another adult and inform the other adult of the nature of the conversation.

Each congregation should send one adult same-gender sponsor for every six campers of that gender. If your congregation cannot provide this sponsor, they should cooperate with other congregations to ensure proper supervision of youth. Adults are at the event to supervise, not for personal fellowship with other adult sponsors. The top priority is supervising the youth and knowing where the youth in your group are at all times.

Adults may not have alcohol or tobacco products at camp. All medications must be in original containers and kept securely away from campers.

Adult sponsors from each congregation will review this policy in its entirety before each Regional Youth Event

Safe Conduct Policies of the Great River Region of the Christian Church (DOC)

Adult / Youth Ratio

While the ratios are listed as "1 adult" per X number of minors, **at least two adults must always be present with minors.** For example, two toddlers require two adults, even though the ratio is no more than four minors to 1 adult.

Birth to 12 months no more than three minors to 1 adult

Toddlers (1 to approx. 3 years) no more than four minors to 1 adult

Preschool (approx. 3 to 5 years) no more than seven minors to 1 adult

Kindergarten through 3rd grade no more than 10 minors to 1 adult

4th grade to 6th grade no more than 12 minors to 1 adult

Youth (12 and older) no more than 20 minors to 1 adult

Our GRR Youth Event Policy states, "each congregation should send one adult same-gender sponsor for every six campers of that gender. If your congregation cannot provide this sponsor, they should cooperate with other congregations to ensure proper supervision of youth."

Volunteer requirements for youth events

Adult Sponsors must be at least 18 years old and 4 years older than the oldest camper they will be supervising. They must also complete the online training, submit two references, complete a background check and sign the policy covenant. Young Adults (18+) may volunteer but will not directly supervise any youth less than four years younger than they are. They must also complete the online training, submit two references, complete a background check and sign the policy covenant.

Youth helpers under the age of 18 may be recruited. They will NOT have direct supervisory roles, but act as support for the other leaders. They must also complete the online training, submit two references, and sign the policy covenant.

Application and screening

All volunteers will complete the event registration form for the event in which they are volunteering prior to the deadline. This form will request contact information for two references for all volunteers. Additionally, volunteers will read & sign the Safe Conduct Policy and the Background Authorization form (18+). Background checks must have time to be returned prior to the start of the volunteer's first event.

Regional office staff will ensure that background checks are current (every 3 years). The regional staff will check references and keep those records on file for each volunteer.

For overnight events: Background checks must be cleared (valid for 3 years), references will be checked (one time only) and volunteers must attend the youth event training prior to each event and complete regionally approved online training (yearly).

Reporting Procedures

These are the reporting procedures for any regional event. (children, youth, or adult) Any abuse (physical, sexual, or bullying) should be reported immediately to the GRR staff person onsite and the director of the event.

SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE WILL BE REPORTED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ACCORDING TO THE STATE OF ARKANSAS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS. WHEN IN DOUBT, REPORT!

Arkansas State Police 501-618-8000

Child Protective Services, Arkansas 1-800-482-5964

Although direct responsibility for an adult with mental or physical disabilities is currently outside the capacity of the region, any abuse upon a vulnerable adult at a GRR event will be immediately reported to the authorities.

General Supervising Procedures

Administrative and Supervisory Visits to Youth Programs- Regional staff serving as youth supervisors and administrators will regularly visit all youth programs to ensure that all activities are well- managed and that youth policies are observed by all in attendance.

Ratios- Each program will follow the ratio requirements that are directly related to the goals of the program and the design of the program area. The employee or volunteer-to-youth ratio should be increased for programs that serve youths with special needs.

Mixed Age Groups- In most incidents involving one youth abusing another youth, the youths are from different age groups. Each program is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve youths from different age groups. Clergy, employees, and volunteers must be aware that close line of sight supervision is required when monitoring programs that mix age groups.

Vulnerable adults - are encouraged to attend GRR events with appropriately trained caregivers. The GRR does not directly supervise vulnerable adults at regional events.

IMPORTANT: These policies will be reviewed on a yearly basis. Any updates will be submitted to the regional board for approval and will be communicated to new and established volunteers.

Safe Conduct Policies Covenant and Background Check

Please complete ASAP!

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of the GRR Safe Conduct Policies and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines.

Further, I understand that the policies may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by the GRR Board.

I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Great River Region's Safe Conduct Policies.

Full name (please print)

Signature

Date: _____

