

Uptown Youth & Kids Safety Procedures

Revised May 2026

Mission Statements

Uptown Youth seeks to serve sixth to twelfth graders and their families through **Biblical teaching, unifying experiences, and intentional discipleship.**

Our goal is for each student to walk closely with Jesus, finding a gospel-centered life of service, community, and rest.

Uptown Kids seeks to serve children from birth to fifth grade and their families by providing **Biblical teaching, parenting resources, and outreach opportunities.**

Our goal is for each child to know they belong to Christ and have a place among His Church.

Volunteer Screening

- All adult Youth & Kids volunteers undergo a **criminal background check** every 3 years.
- We require all adult Youth & Kids volunteers to complete a **MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training** every 3 years.
- Greeters, Uptown Kids Teachers, and Uptown Youth Leaders are required to be communing members of Uptown Church (or in the process of membership).

Child Abuse

The State of North Carolina defines child abuse accordingly: physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a minor, and also may include neglect or exploitation.

Mandatory Reporting

Everyone in North Carolina is a mandated reporter under state law. Any person with reasonable cause* to believe a child/student is being abused or neglected must, under the law, immediately report to the North Carolina Department of Children's Services or to local law enforcement. The reporter can remain anonymous..

**Reasonable suspicion does not mean that you need to have proof that abuse has occurred.*

If you have questions or concerns regarding a child/student you have contact with while volunteering/working with Uptown Youth & Kids, you should discuss your concerns with the **Director of Youth & Kids**. The Director of Youth & Kids can also discuss any concerns with the **Pastoral Staff** and/or **Session** to determine

appropriate steps/actions to be undertaken. This applies as well to potential self-injurious behavior or concerning behavior potentially injurious to others.

There is to be **no** understood agreement between staff/volunteers and children/students that the conversations they have are being held in ***strict*** confidence. If a child/student communicates information regarding abuse, neglect, self-injurious, suicidal or threatening behavior the staff or volunteer should report these concerns in an appropriate manner:

- Abuse/Neglect to proper local/state authority (as well to the Director of Youth & Kids)
- Self-injurious or suicidal behavior/thoughts to the parent/guardian and the **Director of Youth & Kids**
- Threatening or injurious behavior/thoughts to others should be reported to the parent/guardian, the **Director of Youth & Kids**, and as reasonably appropriate, to local/state authorities

Types of Abuse

Sexual abuse (contact or non-contact) is when an adult engages a minor in sexual activity

Physical abuse is conduct intended to cause physical pain or injury (kicking, punching, slapping, choking, etc.)

Emotional abuse (also called psychological abuse) is a broad category, but includes verbal or other treatment of a child that results in impairment of a child's emotional development or that disturbs a child's behavior.

Neglect is the deliberate withholding of things that are essential to the health and wellbeing of a child--can be physical, medical, educational, or emotional. Neglect is the most prevalent form of child maltreatment.

Spiritual abuse is abuse administered under the guise of religion; this can look like the use of religious ideologies to harm a child or the incorporation of religion into another form of abuse.

How to Report

If a child is in immediate danger, a volunteer must request the support of an onsite police officer or call 911.

Within 6 hours, a volunteer (reporter) must complete an Incident Report Form. Both the reporter and **Director of Youth & Kids** must sign the document and retain copies. Then it must be forwarded on to a pastor for signature and submitted to DSS.

All reports to DSS must be made within 24 hours of the original disclosure of suspicion of abuse.

Emergency Procedures (Sunday Morning)

- In any emergency, the **Youth and Kids POC** will lead the emergency response for Youth & Kids on Sunday Morning, coordinating with the **Deacon on Duty**, **General POC**, and volunteers.
- Uptown Church utilizes **two-way radios (walkie-talkies)** for real-time communication between volunteers, deacons, and staff on duty.
 - Messages should be brief, professional, and limited to operational or safety-related communication.

- Evacuation and lockdown procedures for Youth & Kids' spaces must align with Section 5 of the Uptown Security Procedures Manual.
- Parents/guardians will be notified of any emergency involving children as soon as it is safe to do so.

Medical Emergencies

1. **Stay Calm and Assess:** Quickly determine the nature and severity of the emergency.
2. **Call for Help:**
 - Notify the **Deacon on Duty** via radio or phone.
 - Call **911** immediately if the condition appears serious or life-threatening.
3. **Provide Basic Assistance:**
 - If trained, administer first aid or CPR until professional help arrives.
 - Retrieve and use an **AED** if indicated and if trained to do so.
4. **Protect the Area:** Keep bystanders clear to allow responders access.
5. **Document Details:** Record the time of the incident, the person(s) involved, and actions taken.

Minor Injuries:

- There is a first aid kit that is located in the Youth & Kids Closet and Youth Cart in case a child/student is injured.
- Volunteers should immediately notify the **Greeter**, and together they will fill out an incident report.
- Any injury must be reported to the parent. In the event that the child is unable to continue participating in activity, the parents will be texted to pick up the child.
- If the injury is serious but not serious enough to call 911, please contact the **Youth & Kids POC**, and they will locate someone to help.

Fire & Evacuation

1. **Activate the Alarm:** If smoke or fire is detected, immediately activate the nearest fire alarm pull station (if available) and call **911**.
2. **Notify Leadership:** Contact the **Deacon on Duty** via radio or phone to coordinate evacuation and assist emergency responders.
 - If the DOD cannot be reached, contact the **General POC** and **Youth & Kids POC**.
3. Follow the designated evacuation plan:

Youth:

- Locate the safest route to exit your small group room.
- Count the number of students in your group.
- Evacuate to the **Primary Assembly Area (Courtyard)** or, if that area is unsafe, **the Secondary Assembly Area (Berryhill Road Parking Lot.)**.
- Upon arrival at the evacuation site, count the number of students to ensure that everyone is accounted for. If you are missing any students or have additional students in your group, notify the **Youth & Kids POC**.

Kids:

- **Infants and Ones** will be put into the evacuation cribs. Children not in the cribs will be carried by volunteers, deacons and Uptown Kids staff.
- **Twos to Fours** have a rope in their classrooms. Children will line up, holding onto the rings on the rope with one volunteer at the front.
- **Elementary Classrooms** will be lined up and led out by a volunteer.
- One volunteer will stay at the end of every class and bring the iPad from the classroom, which will have the class roster.

- Evacuate to the **Primary Assembly Area (Courtyard)** or, if that area is unsafe, **the Secondary Assembly Area (Berryhill Road Parking Lot.)**.
- Upon arrival at the evacuation site, count the number of students to ensure that everyone is accounted for. If you are missing any students or have additional students in your group, notify the **Youth & Kids POC**.

*No one may re-enter the building until it is cleared by the **Fire Department**.*

Severe Weather

- If a weather warning is issued that requires sheltering, the **Deacon on Duty** or **General POC** will announce the need to move to designated safe areas.
- If you are caught outdoors and hear the tornado sirens, immediately seek shelter.
- **Designated Shelter Areas:**
 - Nursery Area: **Hallway leading to Bathroom and Closet**
 - Youth Room and Elementary Classes: **Hallway between Union and Uptown Offices**
- Close all doors leading to exterior rooms.
- Stay away from all windows, doors, and exterior walls.

Disruptive Individuals

1. Notify Leadership As Soon As Possible:

- Contact the **Deacon on Duty** then **Youth & Kids POC** immediately for support.
- If the situation appears volatile or violent, call **911** without delay.

2. Stay Calm and Observant:

- If approached, speak to the individual using a calm, steady tone and non-threatening body language.
- Maintain a safe distance and avoid physical contact unless necessary for safety.

3. Protect Others:

- Move children/students away from the area.
- Maintain as much normalcy as possible while addressing the issue discreetly.
- If the individual remains uncooperative, do not argue—disengage and wait for assistance.

Intruder/Active Threat

1. Recognize the Threat:

- Be alert to suspicious individuals, unauthorized access, or anyone brandishing a weapon or making violent threats.
- Use the pre-established **code phrase** to discreetly notify staff and security volunteers: **“Mr. Wilson, please report to [last location threat was seen].”**
 - i. **General POC** will immediately lock the Nursery Area doors.
 - ii. **Youth & Kids POC** will coordinate security of students/children based on location of active threat.

2. Call for Help:

- Dial **911** immediately, providing the church name, address, and details of the situation.
- Notify the **Deacon on Duty** via radio or phone.

3. Take Protective Action – “Run, Hide, Fight”:

- **Run:** If a safe path is available, evacuate students/kids immediately. Leave belongings behind.
- **Hide:** If evacuation is not possible, move to a secure area, lock and barricade doors, turn off lights, and remain quiet. Silence phones and remain out of sight.
 - i. Secure Areas: **Youth & Kids Closet, Nursery Bathroom, and Baby Breakroom (turn off automatic light).**
- **Fight:** As a last resort, if directly confronted, adults will fight any live threat on behalf of children.

4. Wait for Law Enforcement:

- When police arrive, follow their instructions carefully, keep hands visible, and do not make sudden movements.

Missing Child

- Immediately notify the **Youth & Kids POC**, who will alert the **General POC & Deacon on Duty**.
- Secure all exits and begin a coordinated search of classrooms, restrooms, and outdoor areas.
- Notify parents/guardians immediately and contact **law enforcement** if the child is not located within two minutes.
- Once resolved, complete an **Incident Report Form** and review the event to identify procedural improvements.

Uptown Kids Policies

Diaper Policy

- Men and women are allowed to change diapers.
- Always attend to a child on the changing table.

- A second adult volunteer must be present in the classroom and within line of sight.

Bathroom Policy

- ***Never take a child to the bathroom alone*** (i.e. take at least two kids to the bathroom at a time or have another adult volunteer with you).
- Stand outside the door. Only offer verbal assistance without looking.
- If help is needed, prop the door open and narrate what you are doing to help.

Bottle Policy

- Volunteers should never mix formula, only parents.
- Unlabeled items are not permitted in Uptown Kids. Never feed a baby with an unlabeled bottle.
- No glass bottles allowed.

Classroom Management

Allergies

- Parents must notify volunteers of an allergy.
- Only parents can administer their child's medication.
- Do not permit outside food if a child with allergies is present.
- Allergy-friendly snacks are available for all Uptown Kids classes.

Behavior Redirection

Aggressive Behavior: Biting, hitting, pushing, scratching, or pulling are considered aggressive behavior and will not be tolerated. If a child is displaying any of these behaviors, notify the **Uptown Kids POC**, and the parent will be contacted.

Well-Child Policy

For the protection of all our children, parents are requested to not bring a child to Uptown Youth & Kids programming when any of the following symptoms exist:

- Fever of 100 or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Rash
- Green or Yellow Nasal Discharge
- Sore throat
- Open sores
- Excessive coughing
- Active and/or untreated lice or nits

This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

- If a child develops any symptoms while in Uptown Kids, volunteers should let the Greeter know if they believe a child is unwell. The Greeter will text the parents to get their child
- Uptown Staff and Greeters reserve the right to not permit a sick child, even if a parent believes symptoms are related to teething.

Drop Off/Pick Up Procedures

- All children must be **checked in** using the church's approved electronic or manual system prior to entering classrooms or activity spaces.
- Each child and parent/guardian will receive matching name and security tags for secure pick-up.

- Children may only be released to authorized individuals 6th grade & older whose security tag matches the child's name tag.
- Late pick-ups or unauthorized pick-up attempts must be reported immediately to the **Youth & Kids POC**.
- Emergency contact and allergy information should be verified at check-in.

Ratios

There must always be **two adults** in every room. Experienced youth aged 16 and older are considered as adults. A greeter may be needed to step into a nursery classroom to ensure ratios.

- **Infants:** 1 adult for every 3 children.
- **Ones:** 1 adult for every 3 children.
- **Twos:** 1 adult for every 5 children.
- **Threes & Fours:** 1 adult for every 7 children.
- **Elementary:** 1 adult for every 8 children.

Uptown Youth Policies

Communications Policy

Please be mindful of the following guidelines when you are in communication (via phone, text, or email) with students in the Youth ministry:

- As a discipleship ministry, we hope for you to have regular relational contact with your students outside of our weekly gatherings. In general, we prefer in person communication for making plans, but recognize that the use of phone communication is necessary.

- When desiring to make plans for a one to one with a student (for the first time) we always want you to ask for parental permission first. Bringing the parent(s) into the plan creates the safest situation for both you and your student(s).
- While in communication (via phone, text, or email) the Gender Rule (see above) applies. No leader should be in phone communication with a student of the opposite gender at any time. The only exception to this rule is if the leader creates a group text with both male and female students and leaders on it.
- If a conversation is initiated via phone, text, or email by a student of the opposite gender, loop in an adult (leader or parent) of that gender if the conversation will carry on or respond politely and concisely if no further conversation needs to be had (i.e. if they ask for an event time or thank you for something)
- If for any reason anything concerning or inappropriate occurs while in phone communications with a student, please inform the Director of Youth & Kids and/or Youth & Kids staff immediately.

Driving Rule

Volunteer leaders and staff should minimize instances that require driving students in their personal vehicles. This is for the safety of the student, the leader, and the church. If this is unavoidable, the volunteer leader should first receive permission from the parent/guardian to drive the student in their personal vehicle as well as establish with the parent/guardian the parameters and frequency with which this may occur. Whenever possible the volunteer or staff member should attempt to have students meet them at the event or destination instead of driving them. This rule must adhere to the Gender Rule and is subject to the 1 to 1 Rule as it pertains to

receiving prior approval from a parent/guardian to interact with their child one to one and within the scope of the Driving Rule.

Gender Rule

No staff or volunteer should be alone with a student of the opposite gender at any time. This commonly becomes an issue prior to or in the moments after a youth ministry event when students are being dropped off or picked up.

Staff and volunteers should coordinate to ensure that no volunteer or staff is alone before events are starting and students are arriving and in particular when events have ended and students remain to be picked up. Staff and volunteers should make sure that at least one male and female leader are present until all students have been picked up.

Hosting Rule

Hosted events are times when a staff member or volunteer may have a function with students at their home, the home of a student or a third party location. This rule does not apply to official Youth Ministry camps, mission trips, Lock- ins, etc. It does apply to occasions when a staff member or volunteer may organize a function for their small group of students. In such occasions the following rules apply:

1. Any hosted function must be approved by the Director of Youth & Kids. In the case of an event hosted by the Director of Youth & Kids, the Associate Pastor will be notified.
2. No one to one (student to volunteer or staff member ratio) hosted functions are acceptable or allowed (If a parent/guardian requests or arranges for a staff member/volunteer to house sit or care for their child while they are out of town, that is not considered an Uptown Youth activity and is an arrangement that is

entered into privately between the parent/guardian and staff member/volunteer).

3. There is never a situation where a volunteer or staff member is hosting students at an event where students of the opposite gender are also in attendance without leaders of the opposite gender.
4. Hosted events hosted at the home of a staff member or volunteer require:
 - a. Parent/guardian permission/consent
 - b. No less than three (3) students in attendance
 - c. More than one leader in attendance
 - d. Should be avoided as possible and instead held at the home of a student when possible, with the parent/guardian present

Social Media Policy

In the case that you personally use social media platforms, please adhere to the following points for interacting with students that are in Uptown Youth:

- Refrain from communicating with students in the Youth ministry on social media platforms until they graduate from High School and our ministry.
- Do not seek out to friend/follow any student in the ministry on any social media platform.
- For leaders that have "closed" or "request only" social media accounts, we ask that you do not accept friendship/follow requests from students of the opposite sex.
- Please be mindful of the fact that parents and students can view what you post.
- Regardless of what form of social media you use or how you use it, we ask for your willingness to take on the responsibility of being an example of

Christ to our students and to each other in all your communications.

- We recognize that social media is a primary form of communication in our world today and can be difficult to navigate in ministry settings. Our hope is that this policy will primarily protect you as a leader.

One-on-One Meetings

At times it is understood that a staff member or volunteer may have a one to one interaction and conversation with a student of the same gender in the routine course of ministry to that student. In such instances the following protocols should be implemented:

1. Prior to a student meeting with a staff member or volunteer one to one for the first time, the staff member or volunteer should contact the parent/guardian receiving permission for their child to meet one to one. The staff member or volunteer should discuss with the parent/guardian the parameters and frequency with which they are ok with the volunteer or staff member meeting with their child without further permission being required.
2. Meetings with students should be in public places that afford an appropriate mix of privacy for conversation but also visibility for safety of both the student and leader.
3. Volunteers will not be one to one with a student in a non-public space or in a closed room of a public space.
4. Staff may meet one to one with a student in their office as appropriate but take precautionary steps as warranted to both create privacy but also prevent an isolated environment. (example: leaving a door cracked or notifying other staff of your meeting).
5. Again, in no situation should a staff member or volunteer be alone with a



student of the opposite gender in public or private environments.

Overnight Trips / Special Circumstances

In the event of an overnight trip or other special circumstance, specific instructions will be given to leaders regarding sleeping, driving, technology, etc.