

# Protecting Teenagers, Volunteers and Staff

## Overview

Young Life is committed to the safety and well-being of our teenage<sup>1</sup> friends, as well as that of our volunteers<sup>2</sup> and staff. This policy lays out minimum guidelines and procedures that help ensure a safe and secure environment for everyone while participating in Young Life.

## Guidelines

Young Life will undertake multiple strategies to provide and maintain a safe and secure environment:

- We will not tolerate abuse, harassment, or bullying. Please refer to our *Harassment and Bullying* policy for more information.
- We will establish procedures to reduce risk and ensure adequate supervision at Young Life events. Please refer to 'The Details' section of this policy for more information.
- We will screen all volunteers and staff who may have unsupervised access to teenagers prior to deploying them. The screening process will include a criminal record check, and may also include but is not limited to: application form, reference check, and driver questionnaire. Please refer to our *Recruitment and Selection, Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers, and Criminal Record Check* policies for more information.
- Within their first year of service, all Young Life staff and volunteer leaders who may have unsupervised access to teenagers will receive training in abuse<sup>3</sup>; teenage self-harm; and teenage mental health so that they can 'recognize, respond, refer and report' appropriately. This training will build a common understanding that informs our ministry. It will be renewed every three years.
- Volunteers and staff will promptly pass on to their supervisor any information that raises concern a teenager may be at risk from abuse, harassment, bullying, neglect, exploitation, self-harm, or non-accidental injury. Please refer to the *Incident Reporting* policy for more detailed information.
- We will report, document, and follow up appropriately all incidents<sup>4</sup> occurring during Young Life events or camps that threaten the health, well-being or safety of teenagers, volunteers or staff, or constitute a violation of this policy. Please refer to the *Incident Reporting and Follow-Up* policy for more detailed information.
- All incidents reported under this policy will be dealt with promptly and will be treated seriously and sensitively.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this policy, the term "teenager" is defined as any person younger than 19 and includes but is not limited to, any young person participating in Young Life, WyldLife, or Skatelite.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this policy, the term "volunteers" includes volunteer leaders working in local areas and camp volunteers, who are 18 years of age or older. Camp volunteers include adult work staff, summer staff, and Property Interns. Property Interns include Spring Crew, Fall Crew, and those Interns serving during the summer and all year.

<sup>3</sup> The term "abuse" is understood to refer to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.

<sup>4</sup> An incident is defined as an accident or "near miss" in which someone is moderately or severely injured or dies, property is damaged, or someone is the victim of or witness to a violent or traumatic act. Incidents may involve staff, volunteers, teenagers, or guests at Young Life events or camps.

- We will provide adequate and appropriate resources to implement this policy and will ensure it is communicated and understood.

## The Details

We all want to protect our teenage friends, our peers and ourselves. In most cases, using good judgment protects our well-being as well as that of others. This section of the policy outlines a few rules, and establishes minimum guidelines that will assist us in making responsible choices.

Staff and volunteers must subscribe to the following:

- It is forbidden for a volunteer or staff member to date, have a romantic interest in, or have any sexual contact with a teenager.
- Personal information that could be used to identify a teenager may not be used in the public domain without the teenager's written informed consent, and their parent or guardian's written informed consent; and may only be used for the purpose for which the information and consent were provided. Public domain includes but is not limited to, use on a Young Life website, social media, or in email updates and newsletters. For more information, please refer to our *Personal Information Protection* policy.
- Photos or videos of teenagers constitute personal information and may only be used in the public domain with the teenager's and their parent or guardian's written informed consent.

More generally, we recognize that we are accountable to:

- Maintain appropriate boundaries in our relationships:
  - Minister primarily to teenagers of our own gender.
  - Drive alone only with a teenager of our own gender.
  - Conduct individual conversations with teenagers in a public arena. Use wisdom and discretion; in some circumstances, it may be best to have another adult present.
  - Respect boundaries of space and touch with everyone.
  - Ensure that physical contact with teenagers is age and developmentally appropriate.
- Reduce risk:
  - Take proactive steps to ensure that our program activities are safe, whether at home or at camp.
  - Ensure that there is adequate supervision at Young Life events. A good benchmark is one leader for every 15 teenagers.
  - Ensure that there is informed parental consent when appropriate. For example, out of town day-trips may require informed written parental consent and medical release. Consult your Regional Director if you are unsure.
  - Screen all drivers with a criminal record check and driver questionnaire.<sup>5</sup> Drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car must never exceed the number of seat belts, and seatbelts must be worn.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, please refer to our *Criminal Record Check* and *Transportation* policies.

- Take action:
  - We love to have fun, and sometimes the line between fun and safe becomes blurred. Exercise leadership and intervene before things “go too far.”
  - Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between a volunteer or staff and a teenager must be confronted immediately and investigated. If you have reason to believe this may be occurring, contact your Regional Director and Human Resources.
  - Take note when a teenager appears aloof or withdrawn, or exhibits a marked personality change. This may indicate a problem that deserves attention. Consult with your Regional Director or Human Resources if you are unsure how to proceed.

Overnight activities, including but not limited to camps, warrant additional precautions:

- Informed written parental consent and medical release forms are required for each teenager in attendance at an overnight activity.
- There must be a minimum of two leaders present for all overnight activities.
- We should maintain a ratio of one leader to every five teenagers at WyldLife camps, or to every seven teenagers at Young Life camps. Each leader should have an assigned group of teenagers for whom they will be responsible for the duration of the camp.
- All supervising adults must be screened with a criminal record check.

Disciplinary action up to and including termination for cause may be taken against any volunteer or staff member who fails to observe this policy or who violates established guidelines.

## Additional Information

### ***Related Documents***

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| • <i>Faith and Conduct</i> policy                 | • <i>Personal Information Protection</i> policy         |
| • <i>Sexual Conduct</i> policy                    | • <i>Recruitment and Selection</i> policy               |
| • <i>Criminal Record Check</i> policy             | • <i>Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers</i> policy |
| • <i>Workplace Harassment and Bullying</i> policy | • Staff Application form                                |
| • <i>Incident Reporting and Follow-Up</i> policy  | • Volunteer Application form                            |

If you have questions, comments or suggestions regarding this policy, please contact the Vice President, Human Resources at the National Service Centre.

### ***Affirmation:***

I have read, understand and agree with the *Protecting Teenagers, Volunteers and Staff* policy as outlined above.

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Name (print)

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Signature

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Date