

SEXUALITY AND CONDUCT POLICY FOR STAFF, STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

A NEW ERA

How does a Bible believing ministry handle the following, increasingly-common scenarios? A homosexual couple who wants to enroll their child in your Christian school, a lesbian who applies for a secretarial position in the church office, one of your male students decides he wants to be a girl, or one of the church staff members' posts on a social networking site that he is now bisexual? As far-off as each of these situations may seem to most churches and ministries, they are happening every day in ministries across the country. Your ministry may be in the midst of dealing with this right now, or maybe you are preparing for the day it happens.

The best protection for a ministry in each of these situations is to have a clearly defined Statement of Faith that sets out the ministry's positions on sexuality, including marriage, homosexuality and other deviant forms of sexual expression, and what constitutes immorality. Each prospective student, parent, staff member or volunteer should be given a copy of the Statement of Faith with this topic included.

Staff and Student Handbooks should also include a Standard of Conduct policy that sets forth the ministry's expectation that students, parents, staff and volunteers will abide by the conduct and spirit expressed within the ministry's Statement of Faith. The Standard of Conduct should clearly state that violations of the Statement of Faith's positions, or its spirit, or violation of any other church or school policies will result in the consequences delineated in the Discipline section. This discipline section should establish, among other things, behavioral expectations and lifestyle choices in light of the Statement of Faith, as well as the consequences for violating these provisions and other Handbook requirements.

Prospective parents, students, staff members and volunteers should be required to sign a document acknowledging their acceptance of the Statement of Faith, and agreement to be bound by the terms of the Handbook, with special attention being drawn to the Standard of Conduct. This acknowledgment should include a statement of understanding that any violations will result in the consequences spelled out in the Discipline section.

The following are sample provisions your ministry can use to amend your Statement of Faith or your Standard of Conduct (or to implement for the first time) in order to unequivocally establish your ministry's position and expectations on these matters of sexuality and marriage.

1. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Ministry's Statement of Faith is typically included in its bylaws. This statement should set forth what the ministry believes about the traditional doctrinal areas of the faith, the doctrinal distinctives of the ministry, and its position on social matters such as separation, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, family relationships, human sexuality and abortion. The following is a sample Statement of Faith provision on human sexuality and marriage.

Human Sexuality

- 1.** We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)
- 2.** We believe that the term "marriage" has only one, legitimate meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, covenantal union, as delineated by Scripture. (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

2. STANDARD OF CONDUCT

The Christian school's Student Handbook and the Church Staff Handbook needs to include a Standard of Conduct that references the Statement of Faith and states that violations of its provisions or its spirit will subject the student or staff member to consequences, including dismissal or expulsion. Without implementation provisions, the Statement of Faith's provisions may be considered outdated or mere aspirations if the church or school were ever sued regarding this issue.

Below, we've provided sample Standard of Conduct policies for both churches and Christian schools. Below that there is a section defining the terms that need to be included when delineating forbidden conduct in the discipline section of the handbook. For example, if "immorality" is to be forbidden, this section should clearly define that term from the viewpoint of the administration.

For the Church:

A staff member or volunteer may have his or her employment terminated or suspended or may be asked to cease his volunteer activities if he/she is out of harmony with the Statement of Faith, the spirit, or the policies of the church whether **on or off property** as determined in the sole discretion of the administration. Reconsiderations of employment or volunteer service following termination or suspension will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

This implementation may also be applied to the conduct, support, and spirit of a staff member or volunteer's spouse or children who are members of the church (if appropriate in light of the church's membership requirements)

For the School:

A student may be dismissed or expelled from school or asked not to return the following year if he/she is out of harmony with the Statement of Faith, the spirit, or the policies of the school whether **on or off property** as determined in the sole discretion of the administration. Readmission considerations following dismissal will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

This implementation may also be applied to the conduct, support, and spirit of parents (if appropriate in light of the school's enrollment standards):

The Christian School handbook also ought to include a provision that discusses the need and desire for parental support of the school's policies. The following is a sample of a parental support statement:

Parental Support

The staff desires a harmonious relationship with parents. If parents have a question about a school policy or an event that involves their child, they are to notify their child's teacher or the administration, where appropriate. An effort will be made to resolve any differences and maintain excellent communication between parents and ministry staff.

Parental support is an essential part of the educational process. If, in the sole discretion of the administration, a parent has failed to support the Administrator or ministry staff or the standards articulated in the ministry's Statement of Faith or Standard of Conduct, the administration reserves the right to deny the student continued enrollment in the school.

3. DISCIPLINE SECTION

In the discipline section, the student and staff handbooks should define what behavior is forbidden. Below are some examples of policies a church and school should consider.

Physical Contact (for school handbooks)

Demonstrations of romantic involvement between students on school property is forbidden. Hand holding, embracing or any other contact that would contribute to undue familiarity will not be tolerated. This type of behavior will result in demerits, suspension or expulsion. Boys and girls must maintain a six-inch distance at all times. Behavior should be above reproach.

Immorality (For church and school staff and student handbooks)

In accordance with the ministry's statement of faith and in recognition of Biblical commands, no immoral conduct will be tolerated. The Bible strictly forbids such conduct, which includes immoral actions as well as advocating for sinful behavior. The following will not be tolerated in any form and will constitute grounds for expulsion or termination of employment: any actions or identifying statements concerning fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, or pornography. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).

Definition of "immoral act"

Bodily contact, actively undertaken or passively permitted, between members of the opposite sex or members of the same sex for the purpose of satisfying sexual desires and any bodily contact that a reasonable person would understand to demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in an immoral or homosexual act.

Definition of "identifying statement"

A statement that a student is a homosexual, bisexual, or otherwise immoral, or words to that effect or language or behavior that a reasonable person would believe is intended to convey the statement that a student engages in or has a propensity or intent to engage in immoral and/or homosexual acts.

Examples: "I am gay," "I am a homosexual," "I have a homosexual orientation."

Homosexual conduct, defined as acts or identifying statements, is incompatible with enrollment at the Christian school and is a basis for dismissal. All students must be treated with dignity and respect, free of threats or harassment.