

Alexandria Covenant Student Ministry Policy for Trips and Retreats

Overview:

This policy has been written for guidance and clarification of our Student Ministry trips and retreats. Our student ministry goal, for trips and retreats, is to have students encounter Jesus and grow in their faith in a safe and secure environment. The opportunity to attend trips and retreats is a privilege. Most middle and high school students are able to handle the privilege and responsibility to attend a trip or retreat, but some may not be ready.

Our trips and retreats often have lots of freedom where a youth leader may not physically be with a student, or group of students, at all times. Overnight accommodations often don't allow adults to be in rooms of students (unless it is dorm style, like a camp). For the safety of our students and leaders, we are only able to take students that we (and parents) are confident can handle the freedom and responsibility required for our trips and retreats.

We have great leaders, who have completed a background and reference check. They are actively involved in our Student Ministry and care about students. Even though they are experienced in youth ministry, most are not trained counselors and are not equipped to handle some of the complex issues facing students today.

If you have questions or concerns about this policy or your student, please contact the Pastor of Student Ministry or Director of Middle School Ministry. We'd be glad to talk about this policy and how it relates to your student.

Registration:

All students attending Alexandria Covenant events must be registered by their legal name and sex at birth. A "nick name" may also be entered in our registration forms.

Public Display of Affection:

We severely limit all public displays of affection at youth groups and other events. PDA is a distraction to students and leaders and not appropriate for these settings.

Bathroom facilities:

At church and other events, all students will need to use the bathrooms that correspond with their sex at birth or a family bathroom when available.

Special Needs Students:

Special needs may include students with cognitive, social, emotional, psychological and/or physical needs of varying degrees. On one end of the scale, if your student cannot function on their own, without consistent adult supervision, we are not trained or equipped to take them on trips and retreats with us. If they are able to function in a Youth Group setting (with a para or with you as support), we'd love to have them participate.

On the other end of the scale, your student might be highly functioning and would fit well in a trip or retreat setting. We'd love to have them join us. Talk with us about how we can help them succeed. Everything in between ... let's have an honest conversation. There may be things we've seen, or you have seen, that would keep your student from participating. These things would be centered around the responsibility or safety of students.

Behavioral Issues:

If your student won't listen to instructions or is defiant toward authority (leaders), this would pose a safety issue for your student, our leaders and our group. Let's talk about these concerns before signing them up. Most retreats have "send home" policies that automatically send home students that break rules or laws. These are always at the parents' expense. As a Student Ministry, we have the same policy for students that won't listen to leaders and/or break rules or laws.

Medical Issues:

We need to be aware of any medical issues and medications your student will be on during our trips. We expect students to be responsible for taking their own medication while away from home. Our leaders are not equipped to monitor medications for students. If your student cannot navigate their own medication, it would be unsafe to send them on a trip or retreat.

LGBTQIA+ Students:

We love all of our students and recognize the wide array of stories and situations represented by the LGBTQIA+ terminology. While each student and situation is unique we need to have some groundwork laid on how we handle doing life together, especially in regards to overnight retreats. We know that some of our students are questioning and exploring their sexual orientation. This does not necessarily exclude these students from our trips and retreats.

Housing:

All trip and retreat housing is sex at birth specific. All students will be housed and registered by their sex at birth and legal name. Students will not be housed in the same room with their girlfriend/boyfriend.

Exception:

Transgender students are welcome to all our youth ministry events, except those with overnight housing. If a student is in the process of transitioning (binding, puberty blockers, testosterone, surgery, etc.), we will not be able to provide housing, since our housing is sex at birth specific. We are also not able to accommodate requests for separate or individual housing transgender students.

Despite needing to make these clarifications and set some firm boundaries, we are committed to being compassionate in our care for students, regardless of how they may identify.