



TRAINING

Students can experience very serious issues, and sometimes they'll share heavy news with you. **Even though you'd like to respect their privacy, you can't always promise a student you won't tell anyone.**

There are three specific situations in which you'll need to tell Student Ministry staff, parents and possibly the authorities the content of what a student has shared with you. Each situation includes the word **"harm."** After a student has divulged something, if you think there's a possibility they're being **harmed by others, harming themselves or intending to harm others**, you need to gather all the information you can and call a Student Ministry staff member ASAP.

FAQ

Q: If a student shares this information in front of other students, what should I do?

A: We recommend thanking the student while other students are around and then asking him or her if you can move someplace where you can talk more in depth. You don't want to be alone with the student, but you could go to the side of the room or into an open space. Every situation is different. Do your best to read the situation and know God put you there for a reason. Ask Him to guide you.

Q: What if I'm not sure they're telling the truth?

A: It's best to assume up front they are telling the truth. We want to err on the side of caution, showing too much concern as opposed to too little.

Q: What if they're threatening to commit suicide in the moment?

A: In this case, getting the student immediate help is your first priority. If they're home, try getting their parents or guardians on the phone and tell them what's happening ASAP. If you can't reach them, call 911 yourself. If you're on the phone with the student at the time, text Student Ministry staff, asking them to call the parents and/or 911 (yes, you can text during a call on most phones). Once help is sent for the students, call Student Ministry staff.

YOUR FIRST STEPS:

- First, **Thank the student** for trusting you enough to share and having the courage to speak up.
- Second, **Gather more information.** Ask the student questions to learn more and make sure you have contact information for them and a guardian. Top question to ask: "What do you mean when you say _____?"
- Third, **Inform the student** that because you care for their safety and well-being, this is something you need to share with Student Ministry staff. Informing the student that you will let them know beforehand anytime you have to share this information with others builds trust.
- Fourth, **Bring Student Ministry staff in the conversation ASAP.** Find a staff member onsite and walk with the student to pull them aside OR if a staff member is not present, call them immediately. That staff member can then walk alongside you and the student through next steps.

Once you call Student Ministry staff, we will help walk you through the next steps.



Safety Guidelines

These guidelines are to protect both the student and the leader. **We want to ensure our students and our leaders are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually safe**, both inside and outside of Student Ministry events. To reach this goal, we have some guidelines for leaders.

- 1 Remember the rule of three.** When you are with students, there should always be three or more people. Never be alone with a student. Even if they ask for a ride to church, let them know you need another person in the car with you (can they invite a friend?). If they want to meet to talk about something personal one-on-one, ask to meet in a coffeeshop or somewhere you will be publicly visible the whole time you're together.
- 2 Make sure you have written parent permission anytime you drive or meet with a student outside of Student Ministry.** This can be as easy as texting the student's mom or dad, "Hey, Chloe wanted to talk with me. Is it ok if we meet at Starbucks today at 4 p.m.?" and take a screenshot of their reply.
- 3 No pranks, bullying or hazing is allowed in Student Ministry.** If your students talk about these things, let them know they're not acceptable. If your students participate in these, let Student Ministry staff know ASAP.
- 4 Review the "During a Crisis" materials** and reach out to a staff member ASAP, even if you think something MIGHT qualify.



DURING A CRISIS

These questions are for you, the Small Group leader, to immediately and directly ask a student when they share sensitive information with you. The answers to these questions will help you and Student Ministry staff to assess what actions, if any, need to be taken.

Abuse (Being harmed by others)

- “WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY _____?”
- “Who has done this?”
- “What specifically did they do?”
- “When did this happen?”
- “Do you **still feel threatened**?”
- “Are you **still in contact** with this person?”
- “Do your **parents** know? Have you told anyone?”

Harm to Self (Big Four):

- “WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU SAY _____?”
- “When was the **last time** you _____?”
- “Do you **still** _____? Are you having thoughts/temptations to _____?”
- “Do your **parents** know? Have you told anyone?”

Harm to Others (includes intention to harm others as well as driving while under the influence):

- “WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY _____?”
- “Do you have a **specific plan** on how to _____?”
- “**When** will you be around this person? When will you see them next?”

IF THERE IS **CURRENT OR POTENTIAL DANGER OR HARM**, THEN **IMMEDIATELY**:

1. **Thank the student** for trusting you enough to share and having the courage to speak up.
2. **Gather more information.** Ask the student questions to learn more and make sure you have contact information for them and a guardian. Top question to ask: “What do you mean when you say _____?”
3. **Inform the student** that because you care for their safety and well-being, this is something you need to share with Student Ministry staff. Informing the student that you will let them know beforehand anytime you have to share this information with others builds trust.
4. **Bring Student Ministry staff in the conversation ASAP.** Find a staff member onsite and walk with the student to pull them aside OR if a staff member is not present, call them immediately. That staff member can then walk alongside you and the student through next steps.



Safe Zone Procedure

The following flow chart guides you through the process of what to do when a student shares something that leads you to believe that they're being harmed, harming themselves or possibly harming others.

