



## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

At Salem4Youth, our mission is to engage young men with the transforming hope of the Gospel to encourage and equip them for biblical reconciliation. Our commitment is to reconcile these young men with their families, requiring active family participation in our programming. As you read through this handbook, please remember that our dedication to your son's well-being and family unity is at the core of everything we do. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to our Executive Director.

### **Parental Commitment**

At Salem4Youth, we recognize that parental commitment is a critical factor in the success of our program. This commitment involves fully supporting our staff, program, rules, and philosophy. It is not uncommon for students to attempt to create a division between the Salem4Youth team and their parents through deception and manipulation. It is essential to recognize and prevent this behavior. Parents can inadvertently undermine the program by discussing the possibility of the child returning home early, enabling the child to avoid consequences, or defending the child when they complain about the program or staff. We encourage parents to approach us with any questions and to keep in mind our shared goal. We are always available to address concerns and seek solutions together, with the understanding that we all have the child's best interests at heart.

### **Parent Biblical Counseling**

Parents are a key part of the program. Parent Biblical Counseling sessions occur regularly and a number of resources are provided to families to assist in the process of reconciling with their teen. All parents are expected to participate in Biblical Counseling with the parent counselor. These sessions will be held twice a month. Virtual sessions may be made available based on need. These Biblical Counseling sessions are designed to help you explore effective parenting approaches and strategies, as well as to address and reconcile past issues between you and your son.

### **Parent Orientation**

Once admitted to the program, parents must schedule an orientation meeting with the Advisement Counsel. This meeting is to review parent commitment, program expectations, and answer questions about the program.

## **Salem4Youth Program Overview**

Salem4Youth offers a transformative 9-month program designed to provide academic, spiritual, and personal development for young men. Designed to foster growth in a structured and supportive environment, the program operates on a rolling enrollment basis and is divided into three structured trimesters. Following the academic year Salem4Youth offers a supplemental Summer Program, which reinforces the progress made during the school year through continued education, discipleship, seasonal activities, and service opportunities. A one-week break separates the beginning and the end academic year from the summer session.

### **Program Duration**

- Academic Year: Second week of September to the first week of June
- Summer Program: Third week of June – Last week of August

### **Academic Calendar**

- Trimester 1: Second week of September – First week of December
- Trimester 2: Second week of December – First week of March
- Trimester 3: Second week of March – First week of June

### **Breaks**

- September Break: First week of September
- June Break: Second week of June

## **Program Features**

### **Educational**

Our school uses **Ignitia**, an online Christian curriculum published by Alpha Omega Publications, a leader in faith-based education since 1977. Ignitia serves grades 3–12 through a flexible, computer-based platform featuring animation, multimedia lessons, quizzes, and core subjects with diverse electives. It is customized to meet individual learning needs and complies with **ISBE and other educational benchmarks**. Instead of rotating classrooms and teachers, we provide a **personalized learning model** with one teacher and a teaching assistant focused on each student's academic needs. This one-on-one approach enhances learning, strengthens relationships, and supports behavior and maturity

## **Vocations**

The vocational courses at Salem4Youth are designed to equip young men with valuable skills and experiences, fostering personal growth and preparing them for future vocational opportunities, all within the framework of the ministry's mission to build meaningful, God-honoring, Christ-centered relationships.

**Equine:** The Equine Program focuses on developing skills in horsemanship and team roping. Students learn to use equipment, practice groundwork, and improve riding skills. They also gain experience in roping dummies and live cattle. The course emphasizes building respect and confidence between horse and rider, with supervised practice in both horsemanship and roping techniques to ensure safety and skill development.

**Woodworking:** The woodworking course teaches students to use various measuring, marking, and cutting tools, both hand and power, to create and work from plans. Students gain experience with different types of joinery, safety practices, and finishing techniques. They also learn about various wood species and carpentry disciplines, with hands-on projects and regular evaluations to track progress.

**Photography:** This yearlong course covers the basics of DSLR camera operations, including composition, lighting, and the history of photography. Students learn to critique and edit photos using Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom, manage digital images, and produce a portfolio. The course includes practical assignments to develop technical and creative skills, with a focus on vocational opportunities in photography.

## **Athletics**

Athletics play a crucial role in mentoring and developing young men at Salem4Youth, motivating and inspiring them to reach their full potential. We value discipline, teamwork, and the opportunity to be part of a team, which benefits our students both spiritually and physically. Salem4Youth's sports program is a member of the Illinois Inter-Agency Athletic Association (IIAA). The IIAA emphasizes that sportsmanship is the most important part of this league. Through the sports program, students have the opportunity to earn credits towards physical education. The sports we play at Salem4Youth include basketball, dodgeball, track, volleyball, soccer, bowling, disc golf, swimming, and softball. For those more interested in writing and art, we also participate in writing and art shows.

## **Biblical Counseling**

Each student meets regularly with a trained and experienced Biblical Counselor. Biblical Counseling is defined as the personal discipleship ministry of God's people to others under the oversight of God's church, dependent upon the authority and sufficiency of God's Word through the work of the Holy Spirit. It seeks to reorient disordered desires, affections, thoughts, behaviors, and worship toward a God-designed anthropology in an effort to restore people to a right fellowship with God and others.

## **Residential Discipleship**

Residential Discipleship focuses on building authentic Christ-sharing relationships with each student. Through daily interactions and intentional mentoring, staff disciple students by living out their faith and guiding them in their spiritual journey. This process fosters a supportive community where students can experience personal growth, develop a deeper understanding of their faith, and build lasting connections rooted in the love and teachings of Jesus Christ. Additionally, students are equipped with practical life skills, such as time management, social skills, and personal responsibilities in order to help them navigate everyday challenges and thrive in all aspects of life.

## **Communications**

Communication between the staff and parents is vital. It is essential for your student to understand that there will be a concerted and supportive effort between staff and their parents. Upon admission, we will provide you with a parent contact sheet that describes the best way to communicate with Salem based on various issues and at various times. For all general questions and concerns please contact the Advisement Council at [advisementcouncil@salem4youth.com](mailto:advisementcouncil@salem4youth.com). You will be notified as soon as possible upon the event of any major issue, including: serious discipline issues, injury from work or sports, medical concerns, run-away, restraint situation, concerns of self-harm, etc. Less serious issues will be communicated during counseling sessions or upon request.

## **Phone Calls**

After the first 7-10 days of residence at Salem4Youth, students will make a phone call home. This call will be arranged by and monitored by the counseling staff. Once a student has completed his orientation packet he will begin to call home once a week. These calls will be supervised by the Cottage Staff. If the call student becomes argumentative and disrespectful, the Cottage Staff may end the phone call in order to process the situation with the student. The student will usually be given the chance to try again if he is able to do so. Students will also call upon the occasion of a successful Phase advancement petition.

## **Mail**

New students most often begin to receive mail from immediate family within the first days of enrollment. In rare cases, Salem4Youth will ask that mail be limited or not sent. Based upon the student's phase level and at the counselor's discretion, in consultation with you, others may be able to send mail to your son. You may send envelopes and stamps, or Salem4Youth can purchase them for your child from their expense account. Please send all mail with a return address. No mail is dispersed without a return address.

## **Gifts**

Gifts may not be sent to your child on holidays, birthdays, or special events. Due to the nature of the program, we ask that you discuss any items that might need sent to Salem4Youth with the front office before purchasing/sending.

## **Parental Visits**

Salem4Youth is committed to the reconciliation of your family. Parent visits and home visits are coordinated with your son's place in the program. Salem4Youth reserves the right to limit visits, should they not be in the best interest of the student, the family, and/or our program. Visits are available twice a month. With a minimum of once a month. All visits will be on campus until Phase 3 of the program.

When traveling home for an academic break, an Advisement Council member will communicate with you and your son regarding expectations, structure, and guidelines for their time at home.

## **THE SALEM PROGRAM**

*(THIS SECTION COPIED FROM THE STUDENT HANDBOOK)*

### **Phases**

The Salem4Youth program is divided up into 4 Phases. Each subsequent phase carries more privilege and responsibility than the phase previous to it. Phase promotion is earned through demonstration of forward progress through the program in a variety of areas.

Upon arrival you will have an Orientation Packet assigned to you. It will be your responsibility to study the handbook and complete the Orientation Packet as completely as you can. Once your packet is completed you will have a phone call home scheduled to take place with your counselor. This typically takes places after about a week, depending on behavior and attitude.

### **Phase 1:**

During Phase One you will be encouraged to explore the reasons you are at Salem4Youth, learn and follow the Salem4Youth guidelines and expectations, learn and practice the assigned Social Skills, and begin to form relationships with staff members. Phase 1 lasts a minimum of 4 weeks.

Phase One students will live by the following guidelines:

- Directly supervised by staff at all times
- Complete any Biblical Counseling assignments
- Weekly calls home will begin based on successful participation in counseling
- Will participate in family visits (on-campus only)
- Mail to/from immediate family only

- Eligible to participate in sports, but will not be eligible for away games (*see sports section for more details*)
- Work with teachers and vocational staff for proper academic placement
- Begin daily grades (gold, silver, bronze)
- No video games or music privileges
- No Extra off-campus privileges

#### **Phase 1 dress code:**

9 pairs of jeans or shorts, 10 t-shirts, 2 pairs of pajama pants, 7 pairs of athletic/gym shorts, 1 bathrobe, 1 winter coat, 1 light jacket, a reasonable amount of underwear and socks (2 week's worth), 1 pair of shower shoes (flip-flops or slides), 3 pairs of shoes/boots/sandals – *exceptions for sports specific footwear will be decided by your coach*

#### **Phase 2:**

During Phase 2 you will be expected to apply the lessons learned during Phase 1. A Phase 2 student should be choosing relationships with positive students and staff. He should be focusing on learning to live successfully within the rules and guidelines and working well with his Biblical Counselor. Phase 2 lasts a minimum of 16 weeks.

Phase 2 students will live by the following guidelines:

- Must be supervised at all times, greater distance from staff members may be allowed at staff discretion
- Complete any Biblical Counseling assignments
- Supervised weekly family phone calls (15 minutes)
- Will participate in family visits
- May send and receive mail from approved contacts
- Eligible to participate in sports – may play in both home and away games
- Eligible for video game time when 65 or higher and during scheduled game time
- Eligible to bring approved, personal musical instrument (see musical instrument policy for specific details)
- Eligible for off-campus opportunities when available

#### **Phase 2 dress code:**

May add 3 shirts and 2 pairs of pants or shorts from home to dress code, may add another pair of shoes.

### **Phase 3:**

A successful Phase 3 student should have nearly mastered living within the Salem4Youth guidelines and expectations. He should be an example to other students by consistently making positive choices and discouraging negative behavior. He should then be able and willing to focus on Biblical Counseling and family issues without neglecting the daily responsibilities of Salem4Youth life. Phase 3 lasts a minimum of 16 weeks.

A Phase 3 student will live by the following guidelines:

- Relaxed supervision based on earned trust – should be able to run short, timed errands independently
- Complete any Biblical Counseling assignments
- Supervised weekly family phone calls (15 mins.)
- Will participate in family visits (off-campus when eligible)
- Phase 3 students will typically be considered before Phase 1 and 2 students for privileges.
- Eligible to use cottage personal CD players. (See music policy under “Cottage Life” section.)
- Eligible for video game time when 65 or higher and during scheduled game time
- Eligible for off-campus opportunities when available

### **Phase 3 Dress code:**

Student-determined, the only restriction being modesty and that all clothing with written messages must be approved before being included in wardrobe. Clothes will be stored neatly and in an organized fashion. If the student is told he has too many clothes, he will follow staff directions without complaint.

### **Phase 4:**

Phase 4 is the time to put into practice the positive skills, attitudes, and behaviors learned in the previous Phases. Phase 4 students should be a consistent, positive influence on the cottage as a whole. Phase 4 is the time to be working with your parents and Advisement Council on a plan for your successful return home. This is also a time for cultivating those staff relationships that will help in the weeks and months after you leave Salem4Youth. Phase 4 lasts will last to the end of your time at Salem4Youth.

A Phase 4 student will live by the following guidelines:

- Relaxed supervision based on earned trust at staff discretion
- Complete any assigned Biblical Counseling
- Unsupervised weekly family phone calls (now 30 minutes)
- Will participate in family visits (off-campus when eligible)
- Modified Phase 4 grade sheet and Student accountability sheet

- Later bedtime
- Eligible for increased Game Room time
- Will be considered first for special privileges and opportunities as they arise

### **Phase Advancement**

The criteria used to evaluate whether a student is eligible to petition to advance to the next phase in the Salem4Youth program are easily separated into 3 main areas:

**Academic** – Does the student follow his weekly lesson plans? Is he putting forth an honest effort in school and vocational classes to better himself? Does he treat his instructors with courtesy and respect? Does he demonstrate good sportsmanship and dependability? Is he a good teammate?

**Spiritual Development** – Is the student cooperative, honest, and open-minded during his regular Biblical Counseling appointment? Has he completed his assigned Biblical Counseling work? Does he have a willingness to engage in gospelizing/discipleship relationships?

**Personal Development** – Does the student know and follow his social skills? What type of relationship does the student have with Salem4Youth staff? Does he treat his peers with kindness and respect? Are his interactions with his family positive and appropriate? Is he familiar with, and does he follow the Salem4Youth Student handbook? Can he demonstrate noticeable progress on the goals assigned to him by the Advisement Council?

In order to demonstrate progress in the above areas, each student will need to meet the following minimum requirements before being eligible to petition the Advisement Council for phase advancement:

- **Phase 1 to Phase 2** – Complete all Biblical Counseling assignments, maintain an average daily point total of at least 60 points per day for the previous two weeks, and avoid any disciplinary restriction for at least 7 days before petitioning.
- **Phase 2 to Phase 3** – Complete all Biblical Counseling assignments, maintain an average daily point total of at least 64 points per day for the previous two weeks, and avoid any disciplinary restriction for at least 10 days before petitioning.
- **Phase 3 to Phase 4** – Complete all Biblical Counseling assignments, maintain an average daily point total of at least 68 points per day for the previous two weeks, and avoid any disciplinary restriction for at least 14 days before petitioning.

All Phase promotion petitions will be heard on Mondays, unless otherwise instructed. Once all prerequisites have been met, students must communicate with the Guidance Counselor and obtain a petition sheet. The petition sheet must be filled out and turned in the Friday prior to the petition date.

Students should treat this process as they would a job interview or similar formal meeting. They should be ready at the scheduled time, dressed appropriately, and ready with their



student handbook containing their social skills, Biblical Counseling assignments, and other pertinent paperwork. Students should be prepared to intelligently discuss their Advisement Council goals, social skills, relationships with staff and other students, Biblical Counseling and family issues, and educational and vocational progress.

### **Holidays**

Our holiday breaks will be Thanksgiving and Christmas. For both breaks your son will be coming home for multiple days. Salem4Youth will determine the dates of these breaks.

### **Trips Away from the Facility**

Your student may travel away from the Salem campus several times throughout the week (dependent on their phase level). This may include going to and from church, special outings, Vocation trips, sporting events, etc.

### **Student Expense Account**

Each parent sets up an expense account for their student in the amount of \$50 - 100. This account is used for a variety of things a student may need, such as personal items (soap, shampoo, Essential clothing, etc.). None of this money will be given to your student and will be used solely for his needs.

### **Student Discipline**

At Salem4Youth, discipline is viewed as an opportunity for growth, restoration, and spiritual maturity. Our approach is rooted in biblical principles, emphasizing accountability, respect, and heart transformation over mere behavior correction. We aim to guide young men toward personal responsibility and Christ-like character through consistent expectations and relational mentorship.

### **Guiding Principles**

- **Restorative, Not Punitive:** Discipline is designed to restore relationships and redirect behavior, not to shame or isolate.
- **Relational Accountability:** Staff members engage students in respectful, truth-centered conversations that promote reflection and repentance.
- **Consistency & Clarity:** Expectations are clearly communicated, and consequences are applied fairly and consistently.
- **Spiritual Formation:** Discipline is integrated with discipleship, helping students understand the deeper heart issues behind their actions.

### **Behavior Expectations**

- Students are expected to:
- Show respect to staff, peers, and property
- Follow daily routines and program guidelines

- Engage in academic, vocational, and spiritual activities
- Demonstrate honesty, responsibility, and self-control
- Participate in conflict resolution when needed

### **Disciplinary Process**

When a student violates expectations:

- **Verbal Redirection:** Staff address the behavior with clarity and compassion.
- **Mentorship Conversation:** A deeper discussion may follow to explore root causes and biblical principles.
- **Loss of Privileges:** Temporary restrictions may apply (e.g., activity participation, free time).
- **Behavior Support Plan:** For repeated concerns, a structured plan may be developed in collaboration with staff and parents.
- **Advisement Council Review:** In cases of serious or ongoing misconduct, the Advisement Council may review the situation and determine next steps, which could include dismissal.

### **Opportunities for Restoration**

- Students are encouraged to seek forgiveness, reconcile with others, and grow through discipleship.
- Staff model grace and truth, reinforcing that discipline is part of God's loving refinement.

### **Runaway Situations**

In a runaway situation, Salem4Youth will contact the Livingston County Sheriff's Department immediately and file a missing persons report. Please understand that we will do all we can to locate your son within a 24-hour time period (follow up on phone calls, search the three mile radius around Salem4Youth, and follow any leads that we might receive). This does not mean that we will be able to drive around for 24 hours, but we will search the area significantly until we are certain there is no immediate sighting, or until we have exhausted all possible leads. Salem will notify parents and keep them informed as frequently as possible. Salem4Youth's program has to continue regardless of a runaway situation. It is very helpful for the parents to do all that they can to check with friends, e-mails, social media accounts, etc. More often than not we see students make initial contact with family. We ask that you stay in communication with us in these situations as well. We will maintain communication with law enforcement and do as much as we can to assist them in their search.

## **Dismissal from Salem**

The Early Exit Policy at Salem4Youth aims to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff by outlining procedures for the early exit of students under specific circumstances. If a student has past issues, crimes, or charges related to extremely violent or sexually predatory behavior, they must exit the program within 24 hours. Additionally, if a student continually acts out with significant threats to staff or other students, or if undisclosed mental limitations or diagnoses come to light, the student must exit the program within 48-72 hours. In all cases, the student's guardian(s) or responsible party will be notified promptly to arrange for the student's pickup within the specified timeframe.

Salem4Youth commits to providing support to the student and their guardian(s) to facilitate a smooth transition during the early exit process. This includes ensuring that the student and their guardian(s) have access to appropriate support and resources. The policy emphasizes the importance of immediate action and communication to address any risks posed by the student's behavior or undisclosed conditions, thereby maintaining a safe environment for all members of the Salem4Youth community.

## **Physical Restraint**

On rare occasions, students may be physically restrained by staff. Restraints are only used as a last resort and for the purpose of protecting students, staff, or others from danger or harm. All restraints are conducted in accordance with guidelines from the Crisis Prevention Institute.