

**CHILD AND YOUTH
SAFETY POLICY
FOR ---- CHURCH**

Adopted ----

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Introduction

To help protect children, ---- **CHURCH (CHURCH)** has adopted the following Child and Youth Safety Policy. It is important that all **CHURCH** paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent physical, emotional and sexual abuse against children. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of Protection and Prevention, and an Acknowledgement to be signed by those people working with children. This policy will be reviewed by the Lead Pastor with Paid Staff and Volunteers on an annual basis.

Purpose

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist the **CHURCH** in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.
4. *Volunteer*: Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.

5. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person. Electronic communication devices may be the source of such abuse.
6. *Child Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law. Electronic communication devices may be the source of such abuse.
7. *Child Physical Abuse*: Non-accidental physical injury to a child.

Protection and Prevention

Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

1. **Employment Application and Volunteer Application**: Any paid staff and volunteers who will work with a minor must complete the Volunteer and Paid Staff Application. The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application, and by a parent or guardian if applicant is a minor, to apply for and qualify for service.

The Application includes questions regarding:

- Name
- Current address.
- Contact information
- Safety training
- Driving record
- Volunteer experience.
- Personal references.

Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is currently a volunteer or employed. This statement authorizes the **CHURCH** to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

2. The CHURCH shall conduct interviews with qualified applicants. If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately accepted to work with children or youth, document the reasons for overriding the prior information.
3. Contact listed references for volunteers who are not well-known by CHURCH staff. Ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.
4. Criminal Background Check: The **CHURCH** will conduct criminal background checks on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors and on any person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. The daycare and preschool shall follow the state licensing requirements relative to required background checks. All criminal background checks will be updated at least every 5 years.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, the **CHURCH**:

1. Will have an adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. At least two non-related adults (over the age of 21) will be assigned to and be present at all house of worship sponsored activities involving children or youth. If youth helpers are conducting house of worship sponsored activities, at least one adult must be assigned to and be present at that activity. "Youth helpers" are defined as youths under the age of 18 and who have successfully completed the screening process set forth in this Policy. State of Minnesota DHS staffing requirements for younger children will be followed.
2. Will monitor facilities during church-sponsored activities involving children.
3. Will release children of elementary-school age or younger only to an authorized parent or guardian and will utilize appropriate sign-in and sign-out procedures.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and will provide parents information regarding the trip.
5. Will use two paid staff or volunteers when transporting minors in vehicles. Drivers must be adults with a clear driving record and not under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Drivers are

required to provide the CHURCH with a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of insurance if a personal vehicle is used.

6. Will require that young children be accompanied to the restroom and that the paid staff or volunteer wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor. If the child requires assistance, the paid staff or volunteer may enter the restroom, but the door shall be left open.
7. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of **CHURCH** property.
8. Will designate a "confidential counselor" to whom any minor can go at any time, without special permission, to discuss any problems he or she is having.

Behavioral Guidelines for Religious Organization Paid Staff

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:

1. To the extent possible, **CHURCH** events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.
2. Whenever possible, paid staff or volunteers should avoid situations where they are alone with a child or youth..
3. If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, obtain parent/guardian permission in advance, or if this is not possible. avoid meeting in isolated environments.
4. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
5. A volunteer or paid staff member shall not use profanity, vulgarities, emotionally abusive or sexual or harassing language, tobacco products, drugs or alcohol at church-sponsored activities.
6. A volunteer or paid staff member shall not utilize electronic communication or social media to transmit any content that is illicit, inappropriate, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or minors involved in ministry activities.
7. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
8. Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.

9. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
10. Anyone who observes or suspects abuse of a minor must take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Immediately report any inappropriate conduct to the proper legal authorities and officials of the **CHURCH** for handling.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

Sexual Offender at the CHURCH

The **CHURCH** may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation but they must adhere to specific guidelines. However, first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children are present. Ask the probation/parole officer to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions don't prohibit participation, implement the following four guidelines.

1. A known sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way;
2. A known sexual offender can only participate in a predetermined service each week; and
3. A known sexual offender must report in and be assigned to an escort who will accompany him or her at all times.
4. The identity of the sexual offender will be disclosed to the congregation.

Response to Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse

CHURCH personnel, paid and volunteer, are required by law to immediately report any suspected case of child abuse, neglect or abandonment. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. Suspicions must be reported by contacting Houston County Child Protective Services, or if the situation is emergent and you suspect the child may be in danger, the La Crescent Police Department or Houston County Sheriff.

The **CHURCH** will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of abuse by a paid employee or volunteer of the **CHURCH**. All accusations of abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege abuse and those who have been accused of abuse.

When an allegation is made involving abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The Lead Pastor or an appointed person will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the Lead Pastor is the individual accused of abuse, then the Council President will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Immediately report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws. Do not continue investigating the incident after notifying authorities.
2. Report the matter to the **CHURCH** insurance carrier.
3. Notify the office of the La Crosse Area Synod.
4. Notify the **CHURCH**'s legal counsel.
5. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
6. **CHURCH** may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
7. An official of the **CHURCH** will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions. During the investigation, an official of the **CHURCH** shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
8. An official of the **CHURCH** (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the governing body of the **CHURCH** and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
9. An official of the **CHURCH** will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
10. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.

Child and Youth Safety Policy Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. **The CHURCH** reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this policy and to implement those changes with or without notice.

I have received a copy of the **CHURCH's** Child and Youth Safety Policy. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of the **CHURCH**.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed

Date Reviewed