

# **SAFE HAVEN GUIDELINES**

## **Guidelines for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults from Abuse**

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# Introduction

For the sake of the witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are intentional, open, and clear about the integrity and standard of conduct to which each congregation, institution, organization, or agency in ministry is called and to which its leaders are held accountable. This document is intended to provide guidelines for the faithful witness of the ministry of Christ Jesus, while providing a “Safe Haven” for children and youth in congregational life.

**Who are child abusers?** In 90% of reported cases of sexual abuse, the offenders were known to the victims or their families. Research has shown that child abusers come from all ethnic and economic groups. Based upon the case studies that have been made, many who abuse children do so out of ignorance of proper disciplinary techniques, thereby inflicting emotional or physical abuse. Unlike physical abuse of a child, which may be accidental, child sexual abuse is a premeditated act. Child molesters defy the stereotypes we have created. It is not easy to identify these individuals.

Note: Children with handicaps often become target for all kinds of abuse. Their handicapping conditions may increase parental frustrations, resulting in neglect, emotional abuse, and physical abuse. Vulnerability to sexual abuse is increased due to physical or mental conditions perceived by the abuser to increase the child’s helplessness.

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## Theological/Biblical Framework

**Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord. Psalm 127:3 (CEV)**

For members in our congregation, becoming a Safe Haven for children, youth and their families affirms our Baptism into the priesthood of believers.

**Directly from the Affirmation of Baptism, Evangelical Lutheran Worship page 236:**

**“You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism to live among God’s faithful people, to hear the word of God and to share in the Lord’s supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?”**

As the church, we bear witness to God’s grace in our lives that comes to us through Holy Baptism. Some of the children to whom we offer a Safe Haven have not been baptized. Some of their families and caregivers have not been baptized. Indeed, some of us who work to form Safe Havens for children and youth have not been baptized. As we work together for the well-being of children, youth, and their families, we ultimately invite people to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

### **Scriptures for Reflection:**

Mark 10:13-16... Jesus blesses the children.

Mark 9:33-37... Who is the greatest?

Mark 4:35-5:1... Jesus stills a storm.

There are many other scriptures in both the Old and New Testament that give the responsibility for care of all children to adults, parents, grandparents, Godparents, etc. Every congregation is called to be a place of hope and healing for people of all ages in its community.

# Definitions

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and, as such, are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through guidelines, policies, and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to demonstrate its love and compassion more fully for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

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## Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years old.

A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

A vulnerable adult is generally defined as someone 18 years or older who, due to physical or mental limitations, is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This could include individuals with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities, the elderly, or those residing in facilities like nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

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## Church Personnel

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following are included in the definition of church personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All rostered leadership whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the synod, congregations, schools, camps or other agencies. For example: pre-schools, after-school programs, theater groups, choirs, and day camps.
3. Those who contract their services to the church, its congregations, schools, or other agencies.
4. Volunteers, including any person who enters or offers him or herself for a church-related service, or who assists with or performs a service, whether they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, committees, etc. For example: Adults serving as sponsors at youth gatherings, as drivers, at camp, in Sunday school classrooms, etc.

## Church Personnel fall into to one of two categories:

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following are included in the definition of **Church Personnel Who Regularly Work With and Around Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults:**

1. All clergy whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church. Includes Youth Director, Choristers Director, Small Group Confirmation Leaders, Luther League meeting leaders.
2. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth, other than church school teachers, in ministries, programs or activities more often than occasionally.
3. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more than occasionally.

For the purposes of this guideline, the following are included in the definition of **Church Personnel Who Occasionally Work With and Around Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults:**

1. Sunday School Teachers, Bible Study Volunteers, Food Ministry, and parent drivers.
2. All paid or volunteer church personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds or who have keys giving them access to the buildings on the grounds.
3. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs, or activities infrequently, generally no more than three times a year or for one program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation of the Christmas Pageant, teaching one “unit” for rotation Sunday School, serving as a substitute Confirmation mentor, etc.)
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally no more than three times a year (i.e. driving to camp, synod gatherings, service projects, etc.)
5. All persons who work or assist in the nursery four or fewer times a year, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise.
6. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth once or twice a year.

## Types and Signs of Abuse

These are the different types of abuse that could be present in all communities and churches. A note that one sign is not enough to validate a sign of abuse, but a combination of signs.

**Neglect:** Omission of the individual basic needs, whether physical, environmental, emotional, or nutritional, that are necessary for a child's well-being, or the failure to protect a child, youth, or vulnerable adult from harm.

### Signs of Neglect:

- Poor environment – dirty or unhygienic
- Poor physical condition and/or personal hygiene
- Pressure sores or ulcers
- Malnutrition or unexplained weight loss
- Untreated injuries and medical problems
- Inconsistent or reluctant contact with medical and social care organizations
- Accumulation of untaken medication
- Uncharacteristic failure to engage in social interaction
- Inappropriate or inadequate clothing

**Emotional Abuse:** Verbal or nonverbal violence toward a child that gives the child the message that the child is “not good” and never will be. Verbal abuse is a very common malady that attacks every human being at some point in their lives, some more than others. It can be a very devastating form of abuse when the person experiences the attacks frequently. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and/or material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

### Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- An air of silence when a particular person is present
- Withdrawal or change in the psychological state of the person
- Insomnia
- Low self-esteem
- Uncooperative and aggressive behaviour
- A change of appetite, weight loss/gain
- Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger
- Apparent false claims, by someone involved with the person, to attract unnecessary treatment

**Physical Abuse:** Physical violence toward a child. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth. Often it is the transference of adult anger.

### Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Assault, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing
- Rough handling
- Scalding and burning
- Physical punishments
- Inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint
- Making someone purposefully uncomfortable (e.g. opening a window and removing blankets)
- Involuntary isolation or confinement
- Misuse of medication (e.g. over-sedation)
- Forcible feeding or withholding food

- Unauthorised restraint, restricting movement (e.g. tying someone to a chair)

**Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation:** Any sexual contact with a child by an adult or an older youth. These acts may range from touching of the penis, vagina, buttocks, or breast/chest area to sexual intercourse. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child, or youth.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.

#### **Signs of Sexual Abuse:**

- Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
- Unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
- Foreign bodies in genital or rectal openings
- Infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
- The uncharacteristic use of explicit sexual language or significant changes in sexual behavior or attitude
- Incontinence not related to any medical diagnosis
- Self-harming
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships
- Fear of receiving help with personal care
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person

**Grooming:** Grooming, particularly in the context of child abuse, is a manipulative process used by predators to build trust and emotional connection with a child and the adults around them, aiming to reduce resistance and facilitate abuse. It's a calculated and insidious method that often progresses in stages, making it challenging to identify at first glance.

#### **Recognizing Signs of Grooming:**

- **Victim selection:** Abusers often observe possible victims and select them based on ease of access to them or their perceived vulnerability.
- **Gaining access and isolating the victim:** Abusers will attempt to physically or emotionally separate a victim from those protecting them and often seek out positions in which they have contact with minors.
- **Trust development and keeping secrets:** Abusers attempt to gain trust of a potential victim through gifts, attention, sharing “secrets” and other means to make them feel that they have a caring relationship and to train them to keep the relationship secret.
- **Desensitization to touch and discussion of sexual topics:** Abusers will often start to touch a victim in ways that appear harmless, such as hugging, wrestling and tickling, and later escalate to increasingly more sexual contact, such as massages or showering together. Abusers may also show the victim pornography or discuss sexual topics with them, to introduce the idea of sexual contact.
- **Attempt by abusers to make their behavior seem natural, to avoid raising**

**suspicions.** For teens, who may be closer in age to the abuser, it can be particularly hard to recognize tactics used in grooming. Be alert for signs that your teen has a relationship with an adult that includes secrecy, undue influence or control, or pushes personal boundaries.

**Drug & Alcohol Abuse:** There is an increase in the use of alcohol among junior and senior high school students. Children or youth that show up at church under the influence of alcohol or drugs, who bring these substances with them on church retreats, camp or other activities or those who are reported by peers to be intoxicated may need help to stop dangerous behavior.

**Signs of Drug & Alcohol Abuse**

- Feeling that you have to use the drug/alcohol regularly — daily or even several times a day
- Having intense urges for the drug/alcohol that block out any other thoughts
- Over time, needing more of the drug/alcohol to get the same effect
- Taking larger amounts of the drug/alcohol over a longer period of time than you intended
- Making certain that you maintain a supply of the drug/alcohol
- Spending money on the drug/alcohol, even though you can't afford it
- Not meeting obligations and work responsibilities, or cutting back on social or recreational activities because of drug/alcohol use
- Continuing to use the drug/alcohol, even though you know it's causing problems in your life or causing you physical or psychological harm
- Doing things to get the drug/alcohol that you normally wouldn't do, such as stealing
- Driving or doing other risky activities when you're under the influence of the drug/alcohol
- Spending a good deal of time getting the drug, using the drug or recovering from the effects of the drug/alcohol.
- Failing in your attempts to stop using the drug
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when you attempt to stop taking the drug/alcohol.

**Economic Exploitation:** Economic exploitation is the deliberate use of a child or youth for money or power. This includes forcing a child to work, using someone against their will, or using another person's labor without offering them adequate compensation.

**Signs of Economic Exploitation:**

- Theft of money or possessions
- Fraud, scamming
- Preventing a person from accessing their own money, benefits or assets
- Employees taking a loan from a person using the service
- Undue pressure, duress, threat or undue influence put on the person in connection with loans, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- Arranging less care than is needed to save money to maximize inheritance
- Denying assistance to manage/monitor financial affairs
- Denying assistance to access benefits
- Misuse of personal allowance in a care home
- Misuse of benefits or direct payments in a family home



- Someone moving into a person's home and living rent free without agreement or under duress
- False representation, using another person's bank account, cards or documents
- Exploitation of a person's money or assets, e.g. unauthorised use of a car
- Misuse of a power of attorney, deputy, appointeeship or other legal authority
- Rogue trading – e.g. unnecessary or overpriced property repairs and failure to carry out agreed repairs or poor workmanship

**Bullying:** Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose.

Usually, bullying happens over and over. Bullying also can happen on-line or electronically.

**Cyberbullying** is when children or teens bully each other using the internet, mobile phones, or other cyber technology. Unfortunately, not everyone takes bullying seriously, including adults.

#### **Signs of Bullying Victim**

- Belongings or clothes getting lost or damaged
- Coming home with physical injuries, like unexplained bruises
- Being afraid to go to school
- Being mysteriously 'ill' each morning
- Skipping school and/or not doing well at school
- \Being nervous or losing confidence
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn
- Asking for or stealing money (to give to bullies)
- Problems eating or sleeping
- Bullying other children

**Elder Abuse:** Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.

#### **Signs of Elder Abuse:**

- Unexplained injuries or physical signs of punishment or restraint such as bruises, scars or burns
- Depression, anxiety, or changes in behavior
- Preventable health problems such as bedsores or unclean living conditions present
- Leaving an older adult who needs help alone without planning for their care
- Changes in mood, becoming withdrawn
- Changes in banking or spending patterns.

# Code of Conduct of Church Personnel

This code of behavior is adopted to help the church create safe environments for all groups and for those who minister with them.

- Church personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children, youth, adults, and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.
- Church personnel agree to not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church personnel will respond with respect, consideration, and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, or socioeconomic status. Church personnel should serve as a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They should avoid even the appearance of favoritism or impropriety.
- Church personnel agree to comply with the congregation's policies for general conduct with members of the congregation.
- In the event that church personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, church personnel agree to report their observations to the church leadership.
- All church personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults and understand that there may be legal requirements to report known or suspected abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.

## Screening and Selection

Any and all **Church Personnel who Regularly Work With or Around Children, Youth, or Vulnerable adults** should be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

1. The application completed by the applicant includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks (as referenced below)
2. Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church. This check is to be updated every 2 years or when the church deems

Any and all **Church Personnel who Occasionally Work with or Around Children, Youth, or Vulnerable adults** should be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

1. The Volunteer Application completed by the applicant includes an acknowledgment for the release of information to conduct background checks (as referenced below)
2. Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church. This check is to be updated every 2 years or when the church

necessary.

3. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. This check is to be updated every 2 years or when the church deems necessary.
4. Individual interview with the applicant conducted by appropriate church personnel based on the purpose of the position.
5. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth. This check is to be updated every year or as the church deems necessary.
6. Applicants who are volunteers must be a member or associate member for six months before working with youth or children alone.

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3. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. This check is to be updated every 2 years or when the church deems necessary.
4. Individual interview with the applicant conducted by appropriate church personnel based on the purpose of the position.
5. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be transporting children or youth. This check is to be updated every year or as the church deems necessary.
6. Applicant must be a member or associate member for six months before working with youth or children alone. Applicants not a member may volunteer under supervision of a member or church staff.

All information gathered about an applicant should be carefully reviewed and evaluated to decide, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not it is appropriate for the applicant to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Church personnel who work with or around children, youth, or vulnerable adults should have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.

To the extent possible, no person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with or around children or youth. For the purpose of this guideline, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, stepparent, stepsibling, grandparent, or co-habitant.

# Education and Training Requirements

Volunteer and Youth Worker Training is required for all **Church Personnel who Regularly Work with or Around Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult** before they start their work with children or youth or, if that is not possible, one hour of child abuse awareness training, aka Safe Haven Training, before they start their work and the rest of the training within three months of starting.

Volunteer and Youth Worker Training is required for all **Church Personnel who Occasionally Work With or Around Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult** before they start their work with children or youth.

Church personnel who are responsible for screening, selection, and supervision of others in programs for children and youth are recommended to complete an additional three hours of specialized education and training in screening, selection, and monitoring every two years.

## Desirable and Undesirable Behaviors

Christian ministries are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our church Personnel from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

### Appropriate and Inappropriate Affection

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- ☐ Brief hugs. Preferred hugs are side-to-side hugs, one-arm hugs and a-frame hugs.
- ☐ Pats on the shoulder or back
- ☐ Handshakes
- ☐ High-Fives and hand slapping
- ☐ Verbal praise
- ☐ Holding hands while walking with small children
- ☐ Sitting beside small children
- ☐ Kneeling or bending down for huddles with small children
- ☐ Holding hands during prayer

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate in ministry settings because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- ☐ Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- ☐ Kisses on the mouth
- ☐ Holding children over three years old on the lap
- ☐ Any sexualized touching; Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- ☐ Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
- ☐ Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- ☐ Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- ☐ Wrestling with children or youth
- ☐ Tickling children or youth
- ☐ Piggyback rides
- ☐ Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- ☐ Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- ☐ Any form of unwanted affection or physical contact
- ☐ Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, —You sure are developing, l or —You look really hot in those jeansl
- ☐ Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear
- ☐ Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- ☐ Private meals with individual children or youth. Private email or written communications with children or youth.
- ☐ Private scheduled meetings, outings or events just with child or youth

## Other Harmful Behavior

Inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. Some behavior may be inherently harmful to children or youth or are the types used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily.

Furthermore, some behaviors and interactions are potentially harmful to children or youth in and of themselves. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Using, possessing, distributing or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while serving as sponsors, participating or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
2. Dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
3. Having sexual contact with a child or youth.
4. Youth or children left unsupervised or given an inappropriate amount of responsibility.
5. Adults sharing inappropriate jokes, stories or personal confessions with children or youth. This includes conversations about their own sexual activities, dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the internet with children or youth.
6. Dancing, games, skits, or jokes that make fun of a person's gender, ethnicity, socio-economic

reality or sexual orientation.

7. Possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.

8. Using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.

9. Giving gifts or sending special or private emails or other communications to only certain children/youth.

10. Holding children over the age of three on the lap.

11. Transporting children or youth alone.

12. Leaving one adult alone with one child or youth at any time. (Even when waiting for a parent who is running late to pick up the child or youth.)

13. Asking a youth to transport another youth or child. (Youth transporting youth should only be done with written parent permission.)

14. Adults meeting alone with a youth or child in a private location, including a Sunday School room, a home, hotel room or cabin.

15. Housing one adult with one child or youth at a camp, youth gathering or other overnight event.

16. Allowing adults and children or youth to share a bed at camp, youth gatherings, or overnight events.

17. Programs for infants and children under six years old should have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.

18. Sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the tent, hotel room or other room. It is preferred that even immediate family members have their own rooms. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleeping with multiple children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.

19. Dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth unless unavoidable.

20. Using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.

21. Using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management

22. Participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities

# **Reporting Inappropriate Behavior, Policy Violations or Abuse**

## **Confidentiality**

When a child or youth asks if you can keep a secret, you should tell them that you are not able to make that commitment. Stay Calm. Do not express shock, as that may make them feel that they've done something wrong. Reassure the victim they did nothing wrong and that you believe in them. Assure them that you care about them and that you want to hear what they have to say. This includes abuse, suicide threats, or information regarding crimes.

## **What to Say (and What Not to Say) to Victims**

Examples of what to say to those who disclose abuse:

- Thank you for telling me.
- I'm sorry this happened to you.
- Your feelings are valid
- I'll do my best to get help for you and your family.
- How are you feeling right now?
- What are you most worried about?

Examples of what NOT to say to those who disclose abuse:

- You can tell me anything; I promise I won't tell anyone else.
- I promise that I will never let this happen to you again.
- The person who did this is a terrible, sick person.
- The person who did this will (should) go to jail for this.

## **Mandatory Reporters**

A mandatory reporter is a person who is required by the state to report suspected abuse or maltreatment. People who are designated as mandatory reporters in the State of Texas include:

- Clergy
- teachers and other school professionals
- social workers
- health practitioners
- counselor or mental health professionals
- childcare providers
- law enforcement officers.

Volunteers at the church are not required to fill out a report, but are required to let the clergy know any suspected abuse or maltreatment of any children, youth and vulnerable adults.

## **Dealing with the Media**

If an abuse incident occurs in your congregation, you may be approached or contacted by a member of the media. If you are approached, please ask for the reporter's name and phone number and respectfully tell them that the designated contact person will be in touch as soon as possible. Afterwards please contact a member of the church staff so that the appropriate contact can be arranged.

## **Reporting Inappropriate Behavior or Policy Violations to Church Workers**

1. When church personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or behaviors that are inconsistent with the policy they should promptly report their observations to appropriate church personnel.
2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children, youth, or vulnerable adults should be reported in one of the following ways:
  - a. A telephone call, email, or meeting with the immediate supervisor of that person;
  - b. A telephone call, email, or meeting with the pastor or other leader in authority;
  - c. A telephone call, email, or meeting with the church council president, or
  - d. A telephone call, meeting, or email to the synod bishop, or assistants to the bishop.
3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be taken seriously.

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## **Reporting Abuse**

1. Church personnel may be legally required to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities.
2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, “in good faith” means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
3. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, church personnel are to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by church personnel directly to the pastor or council president so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.
4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve rostered church personnel should be reported to the Bishop or Assistants to the Bishop through a telephone call, or meeting.

## **Guidelines for Counseling and Advising Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults**

Unless you are a trained, certified, professional counselor, you are not qualified to handle every situation that may arise as you serve in ministry. Issues that should be referred to your pastor, deacon, and/or to a trained professional after responsible reporting include:

Child Neglect	Emotional Abuse
Physical abuse:	Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation
Drug & Alcohol Abuse	Economic Exploitation
Elder Abuse	



# Best Practices for Working with Children: Birth to Grade 5 (Age 0 to 11)

## General Practices:

1. There must be a minimum of two unrelated, non-cohabitating adults always present during church gatherings. Workers and volunteers should not be alone with the child.
2. Establish pickup policies that are appropriate for children. All CTK church events will have a check in form that parents need to sign their children in and out of events. (see example in the forms section)

## Ratio for Events: All events require two adults in each gathering

- Infants (younger than 12 months)- 1 trained adult: 4 infants
- Younger Toddlers (1-2 years)- 1 trained adult: 5 toddlers
- Older Toddlers (2-3 years)- 1 trained adult: 6 older toddlers
- Preschooler (3-5 years)- 1 trained adult: 8 preschoolers
- School Age- 1 trained adult: 10 school age children

## Ratio for Camping: All events require two adults in each gathering

- 5 years and younger: 1 trained adult: 5 children
- 6-10 years old- 1 trained adult: 8 school-age children

## Behavioral Best Practices:

The following are best practices established for appropriate behavioral procedures when serving with children:

- Use positive words. Avoid words that could cause feelings of shame or condemnation, including degrading references to any physical, emotional, or other attributes such as “Boys don’t cry,” “Good girls don’t do that,” or “You are bad.”
- Praise specific behaviors (i.e. “good listening” or “Thank you for waiting.”)
- Corporal punishment of any kind is never appropriate. Never retrain a child unless the child or another child or adult is in danger. Call a member of the ministry staff (Dir. Of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry) immediately in this situation.
- Use a firm, gentle voice addressing and redirecting behavior. Address the behavior; don’t focus on the child.
- Use age appropriate “timeouts” or withdrawal from activity. Help the child rejoin the group when they are ready.
- Actively listen to the child’s expression of anger or frustration. Don’t overact. Seek to understand the underlying cause of the situation.
- Communicate through verbal and nonverbal messages that you have faith in the child’s ability to practice self-control. When they are calm, encourage the child to explore possible solutions to the situation.
- Discuss behavior confidentially with parents when necessary. Share some good news and then discuss inappropriate behavior. Try to end on a positive note.
- Don’t gossip about children or parents with other volunteers/staff members.

## Physical Contact

Keep these best practices in mind when thinking about physical contact:

- Appropriate physical contact includes non-demanding gentle touch of shoulders, hands, arms, head or back, gentle high fives, fist bumps or shaking hands.
- Physical contact of any kind should be initiated by the child. Touch done for the pleasure or satisfaction of the adult is never appropriate.
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child is prohibited

## Bathroom Procedures

It is not appropriate to be alone with a child of any age (other than your own) in the bathroom

- **Infant:** Diapering should be done in the nursery by a parent/legal guardian, staff person, or regular volunteer. Diapering should be done out in the open, never in a private area or without the presence of other workers. Closed bathroom doors are never permitted.
- **Toddler Potty Training:** If a toddler has an accident in underwear/clothing, ideally the parent/legal guardian should change the clothing. If the parent cannot be reached, a church worker or staff can change the underwear/clothing provided there is paperwork on file for this type of situation.
- **Children who are potty-trained:** These children can use the bathroom on their own unless special help is required or the child is too young to use the restroom without assistance. For instance, a 2-year-old may be potty trained, but the child may still need supervision for safety reasons. After the worker has ensured that the bathroom is clear, the work should wait outside the bathroom door, which should remain slightly open. Workers should never be in a closed-door situation with a child or assist them without the child's request or another worker present.
- **Children or youth with special needs:** Diapers or soiled clothes should be changed by a family member or an adult staff member with another adult as a helper. There should be paperwork on file that specifically addresses this situation so that all parties are informed.

# Best Practices for Working with Youth

## Grades 6 to 12 (Ages 12-17)

### General

- All meetings, gatherings, and events associated with youth must have at least two adult leaders. If there is one adult leader, there should be more than one youth in the group.
- Adults should not meet privately with individual youth without parental consent. Even with parental permission, all meetings should be held in a public space where other people are present (such as a restaurant or coffee shop). Youth and leaders should meet at the public space and depart from the public space separately. If a meeting occurs during a regular scheduled program time, it must be in a common visible area.
- Adults should not be alone in a car with an individual youth (other than their own child). When providing rides, leaders should have a third person in the car. In situations when a child is not picked up from an event, parents should be called. If they cannot pick up a youth, the worker should seek another adult to accompany them to take the youth home. If this is not possible, parental consent must be obtained to transport. Care should be taken to plan ahead to avoid finding yourself in these situations.
- Staff and volunteers should not be alone in a home or building with individual youth. If the situation becomes unavoidable (such as a youth is the first to arrive or last to be picked up), the adult should wait with the youth outside the home or building. In bad weather, the adult may leave the main entry or front door open and remain inside with the youth in the front room or entryway. A parent/guardian and staff need to be notified if this happens, for the purpose of transparency and protection of the adults as well as the youth.
- Communication between volunteers or staff members and youth should be limited to communications copied to parents via email or written information sent home. Staff members may choose to communicate to a youth group via Facebook page or group text where everyone is included. One guiding principle for contact with youth is transparency: communication should be visible to others or documented. If you receive suggestive texts, emails, or other communication from a young person, notify the Dir. Of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry or church staff.
- Bullying and Hazing behaviors are unacceptable at all church functions.
- Technology is a blessing, but there is a time and place where we ask to not use technology. This includes in worship, prayer, or any other designated time deemed necessary by adult leaders, church staff, or volunteers.

**Ratio for Events:** All events require two adults in each gathering

- Retreats/rallies/meetings- 1 trained adult: 10 youth
- Off-site camps/mission trips- 1 trained adult: 8 youth

### Physical Contact with Youth

- Volunteers and staff should use discretion as to the frequency and type of physical affection they provide to young people. Touching should be in response to the need of the youth and not the need of the adult.
- Touching should be done in the open, not private. It should have a brief, limited duration.
- Corporal punishment is never permissible. Physical restraint should be used only to protect

the health and welfare of the youth, other in the group, volunteers or staff.

## **Managing interactions Among Youth**

Working with youth can bring up situations relating to teen sexuality and behavior. The “tween” or teenage years are a time of change in how they think, feel, and interact with others. Their bodies are changing through puberty; this is a critical age for child development. They are becoming more private in some ways, such as the amount of information they are willing to share; yet more open in other ways such as interactions with their peers. Youth are likely to attend activities without their parents. There can also be great differences from one teen to another, both physically and their maturity level.

Keep a watchful eye on teenage behaviors. In general, physical contact among youth, such as wrestling or tickling, showing affection in isolated areas, and inappropriate/lengthy embraces, should be discouraged.

Keep in mind: Be aware of possible abuse among youth. Sexual abuse does occur in this age group, and it is important to be mindful of high-risk situations.

## **Off-site Activities and Travel**

*Off-site activities offer a chance to see and experience new things, learn new skills, serve those in need or team up with other groups. Camping and sleepovers can enrich group relationships and offer a fun experience. Although these activities can provide positive experiences, they can also present challenges for churches, volunteers, and staff that serve children and youth and call for different protection requirements, depending on the situation.*

### **Local Travel:**

- Two adult minimum should be following during all off-site activities. One exemption is when the group is being transported in vehicles, but there should always be more than one child or youth in a car with an adult.
- It is not appropriate for children and youth to meet at a volunteer/church staff’s private residence unless some parents are also in attendance. For example, a pool party at someone’s house.
- We encourage parental involvement in programming such as transportation and supervisory duties. All children and youth parents should be aware of where their children are going, as well as when they return. Parents should be notified immediately of any schedule or venue changes.

### **Overnight Travel:**

- There should be at least two approved, unrelated, non-cohabitating adults present for all trips and other events where children and/or youth gather overnight away from the church facility or church campus.
- At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two approved adults present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
- In hotel settings best practices include:
  - o Youth and adults should sleep in separate rooms
  - o Sleeping rooms must be separated by gender

- Assign roommates based on similar age and maturity
- At least three youths should be assigned per room.
- If possible, an adult should be situated between two youth rooms.
- Avoid Motels where rooms are open to an outdoor walkway
- In a camp setting best practices include:
  - Young people and adults should wear appropriate sleepwear
  - Staff and volunteers should not take showers at the same time as children and youth.
  - There should be at two unrelated, non-cohabitating adults sleeping in a cabin where children or youth are sleeping. If this is impossible, sleeping quarters are to always remain open when there is only one adult able to be in the room. Again, an adult should never be alone with a camper.
  - Staff and volunteers are not allowed in the sleeping quarters of the opposite gender without permission. The only exception is an emergency situation.
- Establishing a curfew and bed check with adults visiting rooms in pairs is the responsibility of the adult leaders. If possible, the adults should be of the same gender as the rooms being checked. Never enter the room alone where young people are assigned to sleep on overnight trips. If you must enter, make sure there is at least another adult present
- Make sure to communicate schedules for meals, group meetings, and entertainment to maintain a predictable.

## **Working Off-site with the Elderly**

- Two adult minimum adults are needed. If a caregiver is present, that meets the requirement. Otherwise, assign two person teams for home visits with the elderly.
- Maintain boundaries and be aware of touch. Ask the person before initiating contact such as holding hand or giving a pat on the shoulder.
- Serve the elderly with dignity and respect. Do not make judgements about such things as dress, speech, hygiene without understanding the situation. This may require a follow up with a family member if there are concerns.

## **Service Trips and International Travel**

- Supervision of children and youth should always happen. Youth should be informed and expected to always follow the rules.
- If small groups within the larger groups will be separated, it is important to have cell phones and proper apps for communication.
- If small groups need to happen, they should take several participants with them (at least three).
- When a single youth is part of the group, the youth should either have their own room or two unrelated adults in the room
- If open showers are the only facilities, separate shower times for youth and adults should be designated. Youth and adults should not shower together. There should be shower monitors. Swimsuits may be required for showers in many instances.
- Two adults should always be present at each work site.
- No young person should be alone with an adult from the host mission.
- Be modest in dressing, with minimal jewelry and don't bring anything you would not want to lose. Leave all valuables at home.
- Be considerate of different customs in the local culture. Do not use language, jokes, or

- gestures that may be considered offensive.
- Do not allow youth to accept any rides or invitations to go anywhere without prior permission from the team leader.
  - Be wary of pickpockets and keep valuables always secure.
  - Keep copies of passports for everyone in the group in a secure location in case they are lost or stolen.
  - If you or someone in the group is confronted, do not fight back. Give up your money or valuables and try to get out of the situation safely.

## Guidelines for Using Social Media

*Social media is a collection of online platforms and tools that allow people to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives. It facilitates interactions between groups of people online. The following guidelines are written to encourage, support, and care for individuals in Christ the King Lutheran Church's ministry setting so that social media can be used in an appropriate and safe manner.*

Staff and volunteers are expected to have sufficient knowledge and a certain active command of the social media communication tools used by youth. Staff called for youth ministry need to be fluent in social media and stay up to date on their reach and risks. The guidelines for ministry staff and volunteers engaging with social media consist of the following core principles:

### **1.Honesty about who you are:**

If the conversation relates to Christ the King Church, identify yourself as a volunteer or employee of Christ the King Lutheran Church in the content of your post/comment/other content. Best practice is always to be honest who you are without giving detailed personal information.

### **2.Clarity that your own opinions are your own:**

Include the following notice in every social media profile you maintain: "I work/volunteer at Christ the King Lutheran Church, but this is my own opinion and is not the opinion of the congregation." Unless you have been authorized by ministry staff, you cannot speak on behalf of Christ the King Lutheran Church. Do not portray yourself as a spokesperson on issues relating to Christ the King Church. Realize that people are likely to form an opinion about the congregation or even church in general based on the behavior and comments of volunteers.

### **3.Respect and humility in all communication:**

Protect children, youth, families and volunteers by refraining from sharing their personal information or the content of any conversation or statements made unless you have their express permission to do so. Bringing someone else into an online conversation without their permission can be destructive to a relationship, cause misunderstandings, or violate laws and/or confidentiality.

### **4.Be aware that what you say is permanent, therefore practice good judgment:**

Consider everything you post to the Internet the same as anything you would post to a

physical bulletin board or submit to a newspaper. Many eyes may fall upon your words. Assume that everyone will be reading every post. Search engines and other technologies make it impossible to delete something once posted. Be sure you mean what you say, and say what you mean.

#### **5. When in doubt, ask:**

If you have any questions about what is appropriate, check with pastors or ministry staff before posting.

### **Best Practices for Using Social Media**

- All communication through social media should be public. Private groups, such as one for the CTK Luther League, should be monitored and can be closed, but not hidden.
- We will have two administrators who continually monitor Christ the King Lutheran Church's social media. These administrators are determined by the Church staff. Set up a notification system so administrators can approve or report the post as soon as possible. It only takes a second for a person to take a screen short of an inappropriate comment or post and share it with the public.
- Block users who post inappropriate content.
- Review the terms of service for all social media sites in which you participate as much as possible.
- Take care when commenting on other social media pages.
- Adult leaders and volunteers should not submit friend requests or add followers to their personal social media or request this from young people.
- Adult leaders and volunteers should have written permission from a parent or guardians before posting pictures of minor children on the organization's social media sites. Pictures should not be posted on an adult leader's personal pages.

### **Appropriate Use of Social Media**

Social media can be used as a tool for pastoral care and communication between church staff and volunteers and individuals when positive and safe boundaries are maintained with youth, parents and families.

Some **positive and appropriate** uses are:

- Written praise for accomplishments posted by youth and parents
- "Liking" posts of accomplishments by youth and parents
- Posting questions in support of positive discussions generated by youth/ parents
- Responding to posted questions by youth/parents
- Written messages to communicate church events or activities
- Posting prayers and scripture in response to events, or for bible study and meditation
- Posting approved pictures to promote events and activities at Christ the King Church
- Respond to friend requests from youth after obtaining permission from their parents.

The following social media practices are considered **inappropriate** for leaders in ministry settings:

- Posting inappropriate pictures of youth and parents
- Posting information without the consent of youth and parents

- Tagging youth and parents in pictures without their consent
- “Liking” posts of tragedies of youth
- “Friending” youth on Facebook or other social media platforms without parents consent.

## Guidelines for Creating Online Safe Places

*With virtual instruction comes many opportunities, including being able to reach more people across the globe in some cases. Among other things, online outreach provides an opportunity for those who cannot make it to the physical building to receive spiritual instruction. In fact, the virtual environment helped the church continue to do ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*This, however, does give opportunity for risky behavior to present itself. Even in the virtual environment, there are boundaries awareness situations that warrant consideration.*

### Basic Precautions:

There are several guidelines when thinking about online ministry as it relates to children, youth, and vulnerable adults. These include the following:

- There should be two leaders (trained through Safe Haven) in every online meeting.
- Leaders should be dressed appropriately, as well as children, youth, and vulnerable adults while attending virtual meetings
- Leaders should be cognizant of their surroundings and make sure there are no inappropriate backgrounds or items in the room from which they are streaming. Some appropriate items may be alcohol, smoking paraphernalia, or adult themed materials.
- Parents should be notified if inappropriate activity has occurred or if there are other concerns about online interactions.

### Meeting Controls and Settings:

If the church is hosting or joining an online bible study or group meeting, keep these in mind about the technology you are using.

The host should be able to:

- Make meetings private by requiring a meeting ID and password or using the “waiting room” feature to control which guests join the meeting. Send meeting links via email or text to attendees instead of public links on social media or websites.
- Disable to “join before host” feature, so the meeting does not start until the host initiates it.
- Lock the meeting once it is in session so no new participants can join
- Record and limit recording of the meeting. If children and youth are in the meeting, make sure to have parent consent before this recording.
- Manage file and screen sharing options so only the host can share their screen or files.
- Mute and turn off a participant’s camera
- Remove a participant from meeting
- Control chat parameters. For all ages, consider disabling private chat functions.



## Online Communication Best Practices

- Take care in messaging, whether it is via group text or an online meeting. The ability to chat instantly often tempts people to make statements or initiate conduct that may be inappropriate. Anyone can screen shot a message.
- Leaders should not use electronic communication to post or discuss sensitive topics, including those of a sexual nature.
- A youth or children's ministry staff member or volunteer should not have one on one interactions with a child or youth, including text messages, online, chats or via other communications. **Staff members and volunteers must seek the consent of parents to talk with children and youth via text messages and/or social media.**
- Parents should be included on all online correspondence and invitations to all children and youth events and gatherings
- If a leader receives inappropriate communication from a young person, they should tell the Dir. Of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry immediately.
- Leaders should not take pictures, post images or videos of the online session without parental permission.
- In mentoring or pastoral care situations, the leader must find ways to encourage transparency in the virtual environment. Including another adult in mentoring is a possible solution in this case.
- Other Leaders in the organization should be encouraged to attend or drop in on virtual sessions taking place with children and youth.
- Cyberbullying or harassing behavior online should be reported to church staff.
- Do not share personal details on their online profiles.

## Online Availability

Children and youth are more likely to reach out after hours, especially in times of need, for support or questions. As a leader, you care for the children, youth, and vulnerable adults you serve, and being available to them is an important aspect of ministry. But it is important to maintain boundaries so there are no missteps. Some best practices include:

- Having communication "hours" of availability (with an exemption for an emergency)
- Having clear policies in place for communication with leaders and reminding young people and parents of policies
- Reporting when boundaries have been crossed, whether inadvertent or not.

# Guiding Principles for Ministry with and among LGBTQIA+

1. LGBTQIA+ young people are beloved children of God, made in the image of God and full members of the Body of Christ. This we proclaim and celebrate! “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” -Jeremiah 1

2. Our welcome of LGBTQIA+ young people needs to be specific, regularly articulated, and lived out.

- a. The default understanding in our society is that the church is not welcoming or accepting of LGBTQIA+ people. It is easy for marginalized people to hear “all are welcome” as “all are welcome but me”. Therefore simply saying “All are Welcome” is not enough.
- b. If we aren’t actively, intentionally articulating and living out this welcome, then we are (unintentionally or not) unwelcoming to LGBTQIA+ people.

3. We need to be aware of, and address in our ministries, specific safety and health concerns relating to LGBTQ+ young people, including the following:

- a. They are at greater risk of physical, psychological, spiritual, and social violence than the general teen population.
- b. They have higher levels of alcohol use, drug abuse, and self-harming behavior - including suicide; often with fewer resources to help them at home.
- c. They have higher rates of homelessness than their peers.
- d. They are at greater risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns.

4. We are eager to learn more and to strengthen and grow in our ministry with and among LGBTQIA+ young people in our congregations and communities.

*A good source of information relating to LGBTQIA+ youth health and safety is the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): [www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm)*

LGBTQIA+ stands for: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer or Questioning Intersex Asexual (+) indicates an inclusion of all identities
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## Children and Youth Ministry Events Policies

### Registration

1. We only ask for gender information when needed.
2. When asking for gender information in registration material we offer male/female/non-binary gender options.

### Housing

1. Housing is assigned according to the gender identity of the participant.
2. If event participants or their parents/guardians have concerns regarding housing assignments, they are encouraged to contact an event leader.
3. Housing for non-binary participants will be determined on an individual basis in consultation with the participant and their parents/guardians.
4. The responsibility for determining event housing resides with the staff member relating to the event.

## **Training**

Each Children and Youth Event will provide training relating to the needs of LGBTQIA+ youth for: Volunteers, Sponsor(s), Musician(s); Godly Play Teachers; Confirmation Teachers and Luther League Sponsors; Other key event leaders

Whenever possible a basic orientation for adult participants relating to the needs of LGBTQIA+ youth will be offered. This could be provided in writing in advance of the event or offered at or near the start of the event.

## **Bathrooms**

- Participants and guests will have access to bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity.
- Every effort will be made to provide all-gender single-occupancy bathrooms at synod youth ministry events.

## **General Practices for Supporting LGBTQIA+**

### **1. Children or Youth Ministry Meetings & Events**

- Efforts will be made to hold meetings and events where all gender single-occupancy bathrooms are available.
- Inclusive, positive language will be used.
- LGBTQIA+ people are intentionally invited and welcomed in leadership, planning teams and all other gatherings.

### **2. Training and Resources**

We will make every effort to provide training and resources for congregations relating to safe, healthy ministry with young people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.

### **3. Pronoun Use**

We will encourage the practice of inviting people to share their personal pronouns through name tags and online presence.

# Emergency Preparedness/Active Shooter Plan

*Emergency preparedness is especially important for us because of the added responsibility of caring for children & youth. The purpose of this Emergency Preparedness Plan is to give you step-by step procedures on how to respond to a variety of crisis situations during the initial 30 minutes of occurrence. Following the listed instructions will help you to maintain a calm, safe environment for children and staff, and effectively handle an emergency during the initial impact of the situation. (Based on Crossing Border's Preschool Staff Emergency Procedures for Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2023).*

## Emergency Evacuation and Relocation

When the conditions in the church or when indicated by the authorities, volunteer and/or church staff will evacuate and relocate the children to a safe location nearby as quickly as possible. In the event of evacuation, children under 24 months of age, who have limited mobility, or who otherwise may need assistance, will be personally escorted by a volunteer and/or church staff.

If the evacuation and relocation is due to a specific problem in the building, relocate first to the other building (Church or Chaucer House), or second, relocate to the closest business that is further than 50 feet from the building.

Volunteers and/or church staff will carry with them their emergency supplies and sign in forms with student's information and attendance roster. The Church staff will count the children and verify with the day's attendance roster that all children are safe and accounted for.

Church Staff will contact all parents/guardians to notify them about the evacuation and where they can go to pick up their children/youth. The Church staff or the designee will notify, and stay in communication with, appropriate local authorities and DFPS about the evacuation.

Some situations that may require evacuation and relocation:

- Hazardous materials spills near by
- Fire, smoke, gas leak, or explosion within the school
- Authorities advise to leave the building
- Active shooter/hostile intruder inside the building

Procedure:

1. Make a quick assessment of the situation and of any injuries to children/youth or volunteer
2. Make sure the evacuation route is clear of obstructions
3. Take a first aid kit
4. If possible and time allows, have children/youth take jackets/coats
5. Assemble all the children/youth to ensure all are accounted for
6. Keep everyone calm for an orderly exit
7. If possible, one adult should lead and one follow the children/youth out of the building
8. Re-assemble outside at other building or business
9. If safe to return, re-assemble children inside and take attendance

## Sheltering in Place

Some situations that may require shelter in place include:

- Severe Weather
- Drive by Shooting
- Active shooter/hostile intruder inside buildings
- Authorities advise to shelter in place

In the event that we must shelter in place, the following procedure should be followed:

Procedure:

1. Gather the children inside their classroom, away from windows and have them sit under tables.
2. Close and lock all doors, cover windows or close blinds.
3. If there is a danger of explosion, turn off the ventilation system.
4. Do not allow anyone to enter or leave the building until emergency personnel determine the area is “all clear”.

## Active Shooter

If possible, first call 911 to report the active shooter. In the event of an active shooter incident, staff and children should follow the following steps:

1. **Run:** If possible, staff and children should run away from the shooter and find a safe place to hide. If possible run to other school building or a business more than 50 feet away from the school. When everyone is safe, call 911.
2. **Hide:** If staff/volunteer and children are unable to run, they should hide in a secure location where the shooter is unlikely to find them. Places to hide include any classroom, closet, restroom, or office on any level of the Church or Chaucer House. Be sure to lock doors, move furniture in front of doors/windows if possible, close window blinds or cover windows with paper if possible, turn off lights, silence phones. Everyone should lay low to the ground under or behind tables/desks/bookshelves.
3. **Fight:** If staff and children are unable to run or hide, staff should fight back using whatever means available or necessary.

## Code Adam (Missing Child/Youth)

Code Adam is an emergency procedure used in various establishments to quickly locate a missing child/youth on the church property. Code Adam should be used after extensive search of the church grounds is done. Here are the Code Adam procedures:

1. **Receiving the Report:** When a visitor reports a child/youth missing, staff should gather a detailed description of the individual missing including: Name, age, gender, Height, weight, Hair and eye color, Clothing description (including shoes). If available, a photo of the child should be obtained.
2. **Initial Actions:** The missing child's/youth's description is announced via the facility's public address system (or other communication methods). Designated employees, including those at entrances/exits, should be alerted. The parent or guardian is escorted to a designated area (e.g., service desk) and provided with support.

**3. Search and Monitoring:** Volunteers search the facility in designated areas, checking likely hiding spots. Volunteers at entrances monitor for the child's exit. If the child is found with someone other than the parent/guardian, reasonable efforts may be made to delay their departure, provided it does not put anyone at risk.

**4. Escalation:** If the child/youth is not found within the designated timeframe (usually 10 minutes), local law enforcement is contacted. Security or management personnel will typically take over the search and coordinate with law enforcement.

**5. Reunification:** Once the child/youth is found, they are safely reunited with the parent or guardian. The Code Adam alert is cancelled after the child/youth is found or law enforcement arrives.

## Medical Emergencies

By applying standard principles of action in every emergency medical situation you can prevent further harm and avoid overlooking factors they may affect a child. It is important to recognize signs and symptoms requiring immediate action and ambulance transport to the nearest hospital emergency department, as opposed to those that are not emergencies and can be treated at the school and/or while waiting for the child to be picked up by their parents.

The church staff/volunteer who is with the child should provide first aid according to the circumstances of the emergency. All those involved in the direct care of children must maintain current certification of pediatric First Aid and CPR.

### Responding to Critical Illness or Injury

These are the steps you should follow in the event of an accident:

1. Stay calm. If possible, request assistance from another adult.
2. Check for life-threatening situations (choking, severe bleeding, or shock). Do not move a seriously injured child/person unless their safety and health are at risk.
3. Give CPR or first aid, if necessary. *If available, wear disposable gloves if coming in contact with blood.*
4. Contact 911, if illness or injury is life-threatening. *Stay on the line with the dispatcher and provide information as requested.*
5. If the illness or injury is not life-threatening, contact Emergency Medical Services (EMS) instead of 911. If the EMS directs you, contact the child's physician or, if we have authorization, transport to the nearest urgent care facility.
6. Notify the Center Director. The church staff/volunteer will notify the parents, Director of Administration and Senior Pastor.
  - a. Try to contact the primary guardian first, if they don't answer, try the secondary guardian. If you have to, leave a message:
    - i. ask them to contact you immediately,
    - ii. provide your name and phone number,
    - iii. do not give specifics of the incident in the message.
  - b. If neither guardian answered, proceed to contact the first emergency person until you talk to somebody.
7. Ensure supervision of the other children in the group.
8. Assign an individual to meet the ambulance personnel to guide them to the injured.
9. Pull the medical release form from their file.

10. Assign a staff member to accompany the patient to the hospital.
11. Within 24 hours, record all injuries on an Incident/Illness Report form. Write as many details as possible, including witnesses.
  - a. The Church staff member must review, sign, and date the completed report, and
  - b. Provide parents with a copy of the report and obtain their signature indicating that they reviewed it within 48 hours of the incident.

The Church staff member must notify DFPS within 48 hours if professional health-care was required. If a child dies, notify DFPS immediately.

## **When to Call 911 for Emergency Medical Services**

1. Person is unconscious, semi-conscious or unusually confused.
  2. Person is not breathing.
  3. Person is having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or is choking.
  4. Person has no pulse.
  5. Person has bleeding that won't stop.
  6. Person is coughing up or vomiting blood.
  7. Person has been poisoned.
  8. Person has a seizure for the first time, a seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes, or an atypical seizure.
  9. Person has injuries to the head, neck or back.
  10. Person has sudden, severe pain anywhere in the body.
  11. Person's condition is limb-threatening (for example, severe eye injuries, amputations or other injuries that may leave the child permanently disabled unless he/she receives immediate care.)
  12. Person's condition could worsen or become life-threatening on the way to the hospital if not transported by EMS.
  13. Moving the person could cause further injury.
  14. Person needs the skills or equipment of paramedics or emergency medical technicians.
  15. Distance or traffic conditions would cause a delay in getting the person to the hospital.
- If any of the above conditions exist, or if you are not sure, it is best to call EMS.

## **Also Call 911 if...**

1. You see a suspicious person or vehicle loitering in or near the center
2. A hostile individual enters the center
3. There is an assault on a child or staff person
4. There is an accidental death or homicide
5. There is an uncontrolled hazardous material accident
6. You suspect a parent/guardian who arrives at your facility to pick-up a child may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and you are incapable of preventing their exit

# Acknowledgements for Safe Haven Guidelines

A special thank you to the following organizations and resources that has made these guidelines possible for Christ the King Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas.

Domestic Violence and Abuse, Department of State, United States of America

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

National Children's Alliance

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Safe Gatherings

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, ELCA





# Participation Form for Children and Youth

Date Turned Form Turned In: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of School Student Attends: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ T-Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Baptismal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Student E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_

Home #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

**In case of an emergency, we must be able to reach a parent or guardian in person or by phone at all times during the programming.**

**In case of an emergency, contact this person if parents cannot be reached:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please list all person(s), including parents, who are permitted to pick up student:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Information:** Please check all that apply

☐ Godly Play/Children's Ministry ☐ Luther League ☐ Nursery ☐ Confirmation

### Medical and Liability Release of a Minor or Self

I, the individual or parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_  
(child's name or your name), authorize a representative of Christ the King Church to take such action as deemed necessary for the care, welfare and health of myself/my child including the giving and consent of medical treatment.

#### Allergies, Medication, other health concerns:

**Doctor's Name and Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Co: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy #: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Insured: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attach a copy of front and back of insurance card to this form** (this is for those traveling offsite of the church campus)

### Authorization for Participation of Minors (Under 18)

I give permission for my child to participate in sponsored by Christ the King Church including travel to and from locations, for the period of \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that my child's failure to abide by the covenant may result in his or her being sent home at my own expense. I understand that adult violators will be asked to leave.

#### Media Release:

I the individual or parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_  
give permission to use, publish, or disclose newsletters, brochures, periodicals, posters, websites, or other media related vehicles, any photographs, videos, audios, and any other material which I or my child may have appeared, spoken, written, or otherwise been represented.

#### COVID-19 Release:

By participating in programs, services, and activities of Christ the King Lutheran Church, you agree to the following: On behalf of yourself and your children, you hereby release, covenant not to sue, discharge, and hold harmless Christ the King Lutheran Church, its employees, agents, and representatives, of and from all liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs or expenses of any kind arising out of or relating to your participation in our programs, services or activities. You understand and agree that this release includes any claims based on the actions, omissions, or negligence of this organization, its employees, agents, and representatives, whether a COVID-19 infection occurs before, during, or after participation in any such program, service or activity.

☐ Yes      ☐ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant or Parent/Legal Guardian (if participant is under 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness (an adult not related to the above signer)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Scholarship Request

**Confidential**

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Event : \_\_\_\_\_

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Cost of Trip: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Family Contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell : \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES:

- Financial Assistance is available for all youth and family ministry events on a limited basis.
- All information on this form is completely confidential.
- The Scholarship Request Form should be submitted with the student's registration event form as soon as possible.
- The student's family is asked to contribute whatever amount of money they can.
- Financial Assistance, if approved, is available for the registration/program and travel fees only.

*(The following information is to be filled out by youth:)*

Which trip/retreat are you applying for scholarship assistance?

Please provide a paragraph explaining your interest in the trip you have chosen; i.e. What motivated you to sign up for this trip? What do you hope to take from your experience?

## Staff use only

Approved amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer Application

Confidential

Check desired ministry area: ☐ Children ☐ Junior high ☐ High School  
☐ College-age ☐ Adult ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First MI  
Last

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Best times to reach me at home are: \_\_\_\_\_ May we call you at work? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Position at work: \_\_\_\_\_ Years at current job: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date (mm/dd/yy): \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's License #: \_\_\_\_\_

Church member: ☐ Yes ☐ No

How long have you attended this church? ☐ less than 1 year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ 5+ yrs

Emergency contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
name and relationship

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Medical Information

Have you had any prior injuries that might be aggravated by working in ministry? ☐ yes ☐ no

Are you currently taking any medication prescribed by a doctor for physical or other conditions that would affect your ministry? ☐ yes ☐ no

Do you have any medical conditions that might be hazardous to others? ☐ yes ☐ no

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please explain below:

---

---

## References

Please provide two character references (other than family members) who can identify your strengths and weaknesses and describe your background.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home/work/cell phone Relationship

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home/work/cell phone Relationship

---

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## Background information

Have you, at any time, been involved in or accused, rightly or wrongly, of sexual abuse, maltreatment, or neglect? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Have you ever been accused or convicted of possession / sales of controlled substances or of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Are you using illegal drugs? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Have you been arrested or convicted for any criminal act more serious than a traffic violation?  
☐ yes ☐ no

---

Have you ever been involved romantically or sexually with any student in the youth ministry, or had sexual relations with any minor after you became an adult? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Have you ever been a victim of any form of child abuse? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

If yes, would you like to speak to a counselor or pastor? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Have you ever gone through treatment for alcohol or drug abuse? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Have you ever been asked to step away from ministry or work with students or children in any setting, paid or volunteer? ☐ yes ☐ no

---

Is there anything in your past or current life that might be a problem if we found out about it later?  
☐ yes ☐ no

---

**If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, please explain below:**



## Onsite Sign-in/Sign-out form for students

Name of the Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT NAME (Sign In)	Emergency Contact and Cell phone	Who is picking up?	Sign out:

**If you have any questions about our program or need to contact us,  
please contact Deacon Ben Remmert at 281-468-4686.**



## Waiver / Release for Background Information

I understand Safe Haven Guidelines and agree to be bound by them.

☐ Yes    ☐ No    initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

I, the undersigned, give my authorization to Christ the King Lutheran Church representatives-hereafter referred to as The Church-to verify the information on this form. The Church may contact my references and appropriate government agencies as deemed necessary in order to verify and share my suitability as a church youth ministry worker. I am willing to request and submit to The Church social security check and background checks now and for future needs on myself from Shelby Systems Inc., or a business that offers a similar service. This report may be compiled with information from court records repositories, department of motor vehicles, past or present employers and educational institutions, governmental occupational licensing or registration entities, business or personal references, and any other source required to verify information that I have voluntarily supplied. I understand that I may request a complete and accurate disclosure of the nature and scope of the background verification; to the extent such investigation includes information bearing on my character, general reputation, personal characteristics or mode of living.

**The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.** I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for student ministry.

I further state that **I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF, AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN ACT.** This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

---

Applicant's Name (printed)

---

Social Security Number

Driver's License Number

Date of Birth

---

Applicant's Signature

Date

---

Witness Signature (an adult, other than a relative)

Date



# **CTK SAFE HAVEN**

## **Policies and Procedures Manual**

*Last adopted by the Congregational Council of Christ the King Lutheran Church: November 18, 2009  
Revised by Congregation Council on August 12, 2025*

**I have received a copy of the SAFE HAVEN policy and procedures for Christ the King Lutheran Church. I understand and will comply with these procedures.**

**Printed Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

# SAFE HAVEN: Policies and Procedures Exam

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. 90% of abuse victims are from known perpetrators.
  - A. True
  - B. Fales
2. Sexual Abuse is never the child/youth's fault.
  - A. True
  - B. False
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the failure to provide a child's/youth's basic needs.
  - A. Sexual Abuse
  - B. Physical Abuse
  - C. Neglect
  - D. Emotional Abuse
4. Which of the following are signs of bullying?
  - A. Unwanted aggressive behavior
  - B. Observed and perceived power imbalance
  - C. Repetition
  - D. All the above.
5. Those with special needs are three times more likely to be abused by others.
  - A. True
  - B. False
6. Sexual abusers are often patient in their grooming practices.
  - A. True
  - B. False
7. What is it called when a sexual predator builds trust through gradual, calculated, and escalating process with victims?
  - A. Baiting
  - B. Grooming
  - C. Set Up
8. Which is an action of grooming?
  - A. Befriending a young person to gain trust
  - B. Showing a common interest with a child
  - C. Testing boundaries through inappropriate jokes and accidental touching
  - D. Giving gifts, money, or rewards
  - E. All the above.
9. Why don't victims report their predators?
  - A. Victims feel like they won't be believed in
  - B. Victims feel like they are betraying the predator
  - C. Victims feel responsible for the abuse
  - D. All the above.

10. Abusers typically change grooming behaviors depending on the age of the child/youth?
- A. True
  - B. False
11. How many Safe Haven trained adults should be at every event with children and youth for overnight events?
- A. One
  - B. Two
  - C. Three
  - D. Four
12. In \_\_\_\_\_ churches and organizations, those serving in ministry areas should function as much as possible using the best practices of the Safe Haven program.
- A. Large
  - B. Medium
  - C. All
  - D. Small
13. What should a parent fill out for their child/youth to participate in children/youth programs at church?
- A. Medical/Photo Release
  - B. Authorization for Travel
  - C. Permission Form
  - D. All the above.
14. All volunteers should be at least 5 years older than the children/youth that they are working with.
- A. True
  - B. False
15. Appropriate touching should always be initiated by the vulnerable person- whether child, youth, or adult.
- A. True
  - B. False
16. What is a good way to show affection to young children while maintaining boundary awareness?
- A. Affection is not appropriate in children's ministry
  - B. Require hugs at the door to show that you like everyone
  - C. Offer an optional fist bump or high five
  - D. Ask children why they don't like giving hugs.
17. What are some basic precautions when setting up a virtual environment for gatherings for the church?
- A. Have two Safe Haven trained leaders online with the group.
  - B. Leaders dressed appropriately for the meeting
  - C. Making sure background is safe with no inappropriate messages present
  - D. Set up a meeting id and password for the meeting that is sent to participants through email
  - E. All the above.
18. If a youth says something inappropriate to you via text or email, what should you do?
- A. Take time to think about it. You may be interpreting it wrong.
  - B. Leave it alone, you don't want to get the youth in trouble
  - C. Wait until you see the teen so you can talk with them about it.
  - D. Tell your ministry supervisor.

19. In a virtual environment, there are boundary awareness situations that warrant a review and update of existing policies.
- A. True
  - B. False
20. What is a situation where one adult can safely be alone with several youth during a church event?
- A. When one of the youth is 17
  - B. When at your own home
  - C. When transporting several youth in their car.
  - D. When there are no other volunteers.
21. What is your best response to a media request after an alleged incident at your organization?
- A. I was not a volunteer at the time, so I have no idea.
  - B. That did not happen here.
  - C. I do not know anything about it.
  - D. I can put you in touch with someone you can speak with about it.
22. If someone discloses abuse to you and they ask you not to tell someone, what is the best thing to say?
- A. I will make sure that person is punished for what they did to you.
  - B. I know there is something wrong with that person.
  - C. I may have to tell someone who can help you.
  - D. I promise I will not tell anyone.
23. You can assume a report has already been made if you assume abuse.
- A. True
  - B. False
24. If you suspect elder abuse, it must be reported immediately to a supervisor.
- A. True
  - B. False
25. What are some behavioral best practices when work with children?
- A. Use of positive words
  - B. Praise specific behaviors
  - C. Use firm, gentle voice addressing and redirecting behavior
  - D. Active listening to frustration and anger of the child and communicate trust with child.
  - E. All the above.

*\*Thank you for taking our Safe Haven Guidelines test. This test is to help in teaching and training our volunteers at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas. This test is valid from August 15, 2025 through August 15, 2027. Afterwards the test will be rewritten for the following volunteers.*

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## **For the Church office Only.**

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ (Must score an 80% to pass)

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass      \_\_\_\_\_ Fail

Date Turned into Church office: \_\_\_\_\_