

St. John’s Lutheran Church Child and Youth Safety Policy

Revised November 7, 2013

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This policy was adopted by the Congregational Council on November 19, 2013

Goals of the Policy

The focus of this effort is youth protection. The primary concern is safety for children. The goals of the program are as follows.

1. Educate people regarding the need for children and youth protection.
2. Approach children and youth protection in a positive manner.
3. Help our congregation recruit, hire, and supervise volunteers and staff in such a way as to minimize the potential for abuse.
4. Provide training for volunteers and staff working with children and youth regarding abuse and prevention issues.

Who Is Included in This Policy?

Every church worker, volunteer or paid, who has contact with children and youth or who is in a position of leadership in which they are the sole adult supervising a group of youth or children will go through the standardized screening procedure overseen by the church as outlined in this document. This includes, but is not limited to, pastors, associates in ministry, administrative assistants, secretaries, directors of Christian education, youth workers and directors, Sunday school, vacation Bible school and confirmation superintendents and teachers, nursery staff and volunteers, and custodial workers. This check may include a criminal records check and a reference check to verify information obtained in an interview and/or an application. No one who has committed an act of criminal sexual, physical or emotional abuse shall work with children or youth in a ministry or program sponsored by St. John's Lutheran Church. This document is to inform church workers of the rules they are expected to follow in their activities with minors; and these workers will be expected to complete and sign and return the Statement of Understanding (see Appendix B) after reading this document.

Who Is Excluded from Working with Children and Youth?

Any person who has been convicted of crimes outlined in Sections 940, 944, 948 and 961 of the Wisconsin Statutes, or correlating statutes in another state, shall not participate in any capacity in programs for children or youth.

Expectations of Volunteers and Staff

Every volunteer or staff member working with youth in ministries or programs sponsored by St. John's Lutheran Church is expected to:

- teach the good news of the gospel
- set an example
- mentor
- be a role model for youth
- organize meaningful experiences

Standards of Behavior

In addition to the expectations listed above, the following are standards of behavior for all individuals working with children and youth in our church. These standards are designed to protect youth, adults, families, and the church.

A. Open Door Policy

Work with youth in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter—not behind closed or locked doors. Always welcome and encourage parents and guardians to attend classes, rehearsals, practices, programs, meetings, and events.

B. Dual Leadership

It is our goal to have at least one registered volunteer (see “Children and Youth Ministry Program Application Form, Appendix B) present at all activities involving children or youth. Exceptions are made for Sunday school classes, confirmation classes and youth group meetings held in a room with an observation window or open door. Private consultations between an adult and a minor shall occur when another adult is in the general area. Counseling shall be as confidential as possible without sacrificing safety. Planned individual contact outside the church building shall occur only in public places and with the prior consent of the minor and consent of the parent or guardian. Every effort will be made that enough adult supervision will be provided to maintain a safe environment at youth activities.

C. Youth Contact and Release Information

Youth participants in St. John’s Lutheran Church activities may be asked to complete the St. John’s Lutheran Church Parental Consent & Emergency Medical Release Form (see Appendix B).

D. Transportation

Transportation to and from events shall be the responsibility of the families. During events, drivers shall avoid dropping off or picking up minors without being accompanied by another adult, unless prior approval has been obtained by the parent or guardian. Each youth will have a “Consent for Transportation” form (see Appendix B) on file that gives parents the opportunity to indicate with whom their child is allowed to ride in a car. This form is valid for one calendar year from the date it is filed, and it serves as “prior approval” if so specified by the parent on the form. Drivers for youth events may be asked for auto insurance and driver’s license information.

E. Respect of Privacy

Adult leaders and staff need to respect the privacy of minors and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. Situations requiring privacy include using rest rooms, changing clothes and taking showers. Adults need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

F. Separate Accommodations

A minimum of two adult leaders shall be present at an overnight activity. If youth participants include males and females, the adult leaders shall include both a male and a female. A minor shall not sleep alone in a tent, bedroom, or hotel room with an adult. When minors and adults share a tent, bedroom or hotel room, there shall be at least one adult and two minors per room. If these conditions cannot be met, the event will proceed only with notice of the variance to the policy given to the parents, and specific permission to proceed given by the parents. An adult shall not occupy the same bed as a minor.

Every effort will be made for males and females to sleep in separate rooms at events. On certain events, such as outdoor adventure trips, mission trips or other youth trips in which this is not feasible or the sponsoring organization does not accommodate this, prior notification will be given to parents about the sleeping arrangements. Males and females shall have separate access to bathroom facilities. When separate shower facilities are not available, separate shower schedules for males and females shall be established.

G. Housing

When private homes are used for overnight events, the lead program staff member for the event will make final approval of all adults involved as hosts, hostesses, and chaperones. At least two youth shall be assigned to each home.

H. Secret Activities

Secret activities and organizations are not allowed in the church. All aspects of the church program shall be open to observation by parents and congregational leaders. Church workers will not conduct secret activities or ask that activities be kept secret.

I. Constructive Discipline

Discipline used in church activities shall be constructive, respectful and reflect Christian values. Physical, sexual or emotional punishment should never be permitted. Never deny basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. Be alert to the physical and emotional health of the children and youth.

J. Hazing and Harassment

Physical or verbal hazing, harassment, and initiations shall be prohibited at any church activity. This includes bullying, the use of put-downs, and excessive teasing.

K. Dating

Adult leaders or staff will not date or be romantically involved with children or youth in the congregation.

L. Sexual Activity

No sexual contact shall be permitted between adults and minors. Sexual comments or jokes, the showing of sexual material, the exposure of sexual parts of the minor's body and/or the adult's body or other sexual behaviors shall be prohibited.

M. Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs and Weapons

The use of alcohol, tobacco products, illegal drugs, and weapons of any kind shall be prohibited during any church sponsored youth or children's activity. A group covenant for a specific activity, signed by church volunteers/staff, parents and youth, may note exceptions for certain items that are deemed appropriate for the activity, such as a pocket knife for a camping trip.

N. Summary of Event Supervision Expectations

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	INFORMATION NEEDED	SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT
Sunday School	Sunday School Registration Form	At least one adult per classroom
Youth Events on site	Event Registration Form	Two or more adults present OR inform parents if only one adult
Youth Events off site	St. John's Lutheran Church Parental Consent & Emergency Medical Release Form	Two or more adults present OR inform parents if only one adult Background check may be done Proof of driver's license and auto insurance may be required
Overnight Youth Activities on or off site	St. John's Lutheran Church Parental Consent & Emergency Medical Release Form	At least one male and one female supervisor (if both males and female youth participate) Background check will be done Proof of driver's license and auto insurance may be required

Reporting Violations of Congregational Standards

If an adult volunteer or staff person is suspected of inappropriate behavior while working with children or youth, action needs to be taken. This is the procedure to evaluate the impact of this behavior on the adult's suitability to work with children and youth.

An allegation shall be made in writing and submitted to the Child and Youth Safety Task Force, which shall consist of one of the pastors, the Education Committee Chairperson and the Youth Committee Chairperson. If the allegation is against one of the above named persons, or one of the pastors, the allegation should be made to the Executive Committee of the Congregational Council.

The Child and Youth Safety Task Force or the Executive Committee reviews the allegation to determine if it substantially relates to youth safety and/or the work the individual is performing. Use the standards of behavior in this handbook and the Wisconsin Statutes (940,944, 948, 961) as a basis for evaluation.

If the behavior does not put children or youth at risk or raise safety concerns, have a conversation with the individual about steps to resolve the problem.

If the behavior raises children and youth safety concerns, temporarily suspend the individual until the circumstances surrounding the allegation are reviewed by the youth task force. Then take the following steps:

1. Contact law enforcement personnel if appropriate.
2. Notify people on a need-to-know basis of the suspension.
3. The youth task force reviews the evidence and removes the individual if evidence shows there are youth safety concerns.
4. Notify people on a need-to-know basis of the resolution, including the pastors and the Executive Committee.

Record Keeping

It is important for our congregation to set up a system to track volunteer and staff status in the Child and Youth Safety Program. We will keep the following information on file for each volunteer and staff:

- application form (see Appendix B)
- name submitted to Department of Justice for background check
- background check results from Department of Justice
- material from interview & references (notes, etc.)
- statement of understanding (see Appendix B)

These records will be kept on file for two years. After this time a volunteer will need to fill out new information if he or she desires to continue to work with children and youth in our congregation. The leader of any scheduled youth activity shall ensure that all adult leaders have the correct paperwork on file.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important to the volunteer, the congregation, and the credibility of the Child and Youth Safety Program. Information is not to be shared from the application forms, references, or records with anyone outside of those given personnel duties as part of their paid or volunteer work. The personnel who handle this information are required to sign a statement agreeing to maintain this information in confidence.

Paperwork related to the Child and Youth Safety Program will be carefully handled and not left out in common view. St. John's will keep paperwork in a secure place in the church office. Although the result of the background check is legally public information, we have chosen to treat it as confidential. We will not give out the information we gather.

Statement of Understanding

The Statement of Understanding provides a means for a church staff person or volunteer, to signify that he or she understands the information presented in the St. John's Lutheran Church Child and Youth Safety Policy and he or she agrees to comply with all of the procedures and the program developed and implemented by this congregation. The responsibility of understanding is placed on the individual and not the congregation.

Appendix A: Abuse Information

What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse or neglect includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; non-supervision; educational neglect; medical neglect; and abandonment. Specific definitions and examples follow.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical injury includes but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising, bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death, bodily injury which causes serious permanent disfigurement, or bodily injury which causes permanent or protracted loss of the function of an organ or body member.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can be divided into two types—touch and non-touch. Sexual abuse involving touch includes: sexual intercourse or sexual contact; sexual exploitation; or permitting, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution or a sexual activity. Non-touch sexual abuse includes: showing a child pornography or talking about pornography, obscene jokes, or not respecting a child's right to privacy as they shower or change clothes.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning which may be exhibited by severe anxiety, depression or aggression. A child may have suffered emotional damage if the child exhibits severe anxiety, severe depression, severe withdrawal, or outward aggressive behavior exhibited to a severe degree. If there are substantial and observable changes in behavior, emotional response or cognition, outside the range of what is normal for that child's age and stage of development, the child may have suffered emotional damage.

Emotional damage is not considered reportable child abuse until the parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused, or been unable to obtain treatment for the child or in some way has failed to take steps to relieve the child's symptoms. The only exception is for parents who have failed to seek help for reasons of poverty.

Neglect

A neglected child is one whose parent or caretaker fails, refuses or is unable for reasons other than poverty, to provide the necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

Impact of Child Abuse

The impact of child abuse can affect victims throughout their lives. Victims of abuse are more likely than non-victims to suffer with depression and low self-esteem. They are more susceptible to drugs, alcohol,

running away, early pregnancy (for females) and becoming involved in prostitution and pornography. Child abuse victims also are more likely than non-victims to become abusers themselves.

Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Following are the major signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Evidence of one, or even several of the signs may not indicate that abuse has occurred. It may indicate that other conditions or problems exist. Child abuse and neglect may be suspected if a number of the signs occur together or frequently reoccur.

Physical Abuse

- bruises, welts on face, neck, chest, and back
- injuries in the shape of object (belt, cord)
- unexplained burns on palms, soles, back
- fractures that do not fit story of injury
- delay in seeking medical help
- extremes in behavior: very aggressive or withdrawn and shy
- afraid to go home
- frightened of parents
- fearful of other adults

Sexual Abuse

- fear of being touched
- unusual interest in sex for age
- pain, swelling, or itching in genital areas
- bruises, bleeding, discharge in genital areas
- difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination, pain
- stained or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease
- refusal to take part in sports or other physical activities
- poor peer relationships
- runaway or delinquent behavior
- change in eating and sleeping habits
- regression in age level appropriate behavior
- recurring physical complaints

Emotional Abuse

- low self-esteem
- self-denigration
- severe depression
- aggression
- withdrawal
- severe anxiety
- failure to learn

Neglect

- poor hygiene, odor
- inappropriately dressed for weather
- needs medical or dental care
- left alone, unsupervised for long periods
- failure to thrive, malnutrition
- constant hunger, begs or steals food
- extreme willingness to please
- frequent absence from school
- arrives early and stays late at school or play areas or other people's homes

(Information from "It shouldn't hurt to be a child... but sometimes it does" brochure, produced by the Bureau for Children, Youth and Families, Division of Community Services, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services.)

How do I respond to a child who's been abused?

- Help them feel believed.
- Assure them that what happened was not their fault and they were right in telling someone.
- Be sensitive to their feelings, concerns, and questions.
- Let them know you are willing to listen.
- Let them know that you will not discuss what they tell you with anyone who does not need to know what happened.

Facts about Abuse

- In 1995, approximately twice as many children were victims of neglect (52%) as were victims of the next-most-frequent type of maltreatment, physical abuse (25%). Approximately 13% of the abuse victims had been sexually abused.
- More than half of all victims of abuse are younger than eight years old.
- Females are about three times more likely than males to be victims of sexual abuse. Females are also slightly more likely to suffer emotional abuse. Males are slightly more likely to be victims of other types of maltreatment.
- Parents make up about 80% of the perpetrators of child maltreatment. An additional 10% are other relatives of the victim.
- About 80% of sexual abuse perpetrators were known to the victim, many times a relative or family friend.
- An estimated 1 in 4 females and 1 in 6 males will be molested by the time they are 18 years old.
- Sexual abuse happens repeatedly, especially in cases of incest.
- Sex offenders often play on a child's need for affection.
- Abuse is committed by people of all ages, races, socio-economic status, and geographic locations.
- Molesters are rarely homosexual.
- Abusive persons can be highly regarded people in the community, often attending church on a regular basis.

- Most molesters do not stop with one child. Only about 1% of children lie about being sexually abused. They are more apt to say that the abuse did not occur when it really did happen to them.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

According to Section 48.981 of the Wisconsin Statutes, those having cause to suspect that a minor, seen in the course of professional responsibility, has or will be the victim of abuse or neglect, must report the case immediately (not more than 24 hours after cause) by telephone or personal visit to the local county child social service agency, the office of the county sheriff, or the city police department.

Those required to report include: physicians, coroners, physical/occupational/speech therapists, nurses, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, paramedics, ambulance staff, child care workers, alcohol and drug counselors, clergy, social and public assistance workers, school administrators and counselors, teachers, and law enforcement officers. All leaders and staff, even those who are not mandated reporters, can view reporting suspected abuse as a moral responsibility to help assure children and youth a safe environment.

Concern for the alleged victim, good judgment and open communication are the standards surrounding the reporting of an alleged case of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Any person who reports an incident in good faith is immune from either civil or criminal liability and may not be discharged from employment for doing so. All reports are treated with confidentiality by the authorities.

Suspicious of child abuse occurring during an event should be reported to the event coordinator and local authorities. The alleged perpetrator should be separated from children and supervised until the proper authorities arrive on the scene. Keep calm, stay with the child and know that you do not have to deal with the victim or information alone. Do not try to investigate or interrogate either the child or the alleged perpetrator.

If you suspect that a child is being abused or a child has confided in you that he/she has been abused, consider the following steps:

- Stay calm, listen respectfully to the child.
- How you respond sends critical messages to the child. If the child suspects shock, panic, disgust or other negative reactions, the child may not talk about the abuse, may deny the abuse, or may think that the abuse is his or her fault.
- Is the child in immediate danger? Can the child return to the parent or caretaker? Is there immediate fear of harm?
- If you suspect that there is abuse occurring with a child with whom you work, is there another volunteer or staff member who could support or identify this abuse along with you?
- Do not try to investigate what has happened or what you believe may have happened. The reporter's job is only to report, others will handle investigation and judgments.
- Please note that reporting child abuse is not mandated for volunteers working with children and youth. Your reporting of child abuse is viewed as a moral responsibility to assure a safe environment for the child.

- Anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected, and has reported this in good faith, is immune from civil or criminal liability.
- Non-emergency reporting (child not in immediate danger) is handled through the county Department of Social/Human. Services (266-3036). You will first talk with a social worker who will take the report from you.
- Be prepared to give the child's name, address, parent's names, sibling's names, schools attended, and any other factual family background that you know. (But a name alone is sufficient. You are not the investigator.)
- It is strongly encouraged that you give your name (even first name only) and your phone number; all information is legally kept confidential.
- Your report is given to a social worker who investigates the case. Giving your name and phone number allows the social worker to call you and ask for further information; in most cases you would be called only once.
- In emergency situations (child is in immediate danger), you are asked to contact local law enforcement (sheriff or police). Dial 9-1-1. Your report will be taken by their staff.
- Once a report is filed, an investigation must begin within 24 hours and must be completed within 60 days. You, as the reporting person, may request a letter to confirm that an investigation will be done. Results of the investigation will not be sent to you unless you are a mandated reporting party.
- After the investigation has been completed and if any abuse has been substantiated, the county may require the following actions to be taken by the family: parenting classes, AODA counseling, parent time outs from children, removal of the child from the home, counseling for the child, as well as other options. The person who allegedly abused the child may be charged with child abuse in either criminal court or juvenile court.

Appendix B: Forms Related to this Policy

St. John's Lutheran Church

Confidentiality Statement for Children and Youth Staff and Volunteers

I, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge that in my service for my congregation I will have access to confidential information contained in the application forms and/or records of individuals serving the youth of our church. I agree that, except as otherwise required by law, I shall not disclose any such confidential information to any unauthorized person. I acknowledge that a proven breach of confidentiality may be cause for termination from my volunteer position or employment.

Volunteer or Employee Signature Date

Printed Name

Statement of Understanding for Children and Youth Staff and Volunteers

I, the undersigned, am assuming responsibility for having read and understood the information contained in St. John's Lutheran Church's Child and Youth Safety Policy and will comply with the procedures and program laid out in said manual and training as implemented by this congregation.

Signature Date

Printed Name

St. John's Lutheran Church
Volunteer Application Form: Children and Youth Ministry Program

Full Name:		
Street Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Daytime Phone:		Evening Phone:
Date of Birth:	Gender:	Social Security Number:

Please give brief answers to the following questions:

Why do you want to be an adult leader in our congregation's youth program?
What aspects and activities of our youth program most interest you?
In general, with what age youth would you prefer to work?
List programs and activities (in the church and community) where you have previously work with youth.
Please give names and contact information (telephone, address) for three references that can provide information relevant to your work with youth. <i>(only if you have been a member of St. John's for 6 months or less)</i>

Background Check Information

(All information in this section of the application will be kept confidential)

Is there any circumstance in your background which would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, care or guidance of youth? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, please explain.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? _____ yes _____ no

(This is only given consideration if the offenses substantially relate to the job.)

If yes, please explain.

Do you have any pending charges or convictions? _____ yes _____ no

(This is only given consideration if the charges substantially relate to the job.)

If yes, please explain.

Have you ever been accused of sexual misconduct or abuse? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, by whom were you accused? Was there any court involvement or social service involvement?

Do you currently use illegal drugs? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, please explain.

Code of Ethics Statement

All the information I have provided in the process of applying to work with the children and/or youth of St. John's Lutheran Church is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I voluntarily and knowingly authorize any person named herein as a reference to give to the staff of St. John's Lutheran Church any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and youth. I voluntarily and knowingly fully release and discharge all such references from liability for any evaluation provided of me. I consent to having a State of Wisconsin Department of Justice records check.

Signature

Date

St. John's Lutheran Church

Parental Consent & Emergency Medical Release Form

For Transportation & Off-Campus Activities

PLEASE NOTE: Parent and student must sign this form. Kindly return completed form to the St. John's Lutheran Church office at your earliest possible convenience. Thanks for your understanding and cooperation!

Student Name:		Grade:	
Street Address:		City, State, Zip:	
Home Phone:	Parent Cell Phone:	Parent Work Phone:	Student Cell Phone:
Family Email:			
Custodial Parent / Guardian Name:			
Student's Doctor:		Doctor's Phone #:	
Family Health Insurance Carrier:		Insurance Policy #:	
Medication(s) to be taken <i>(Please list with instructions-use back of form if necessary):</i>			
Other Medical Information <i>(allergies, medical conditions, etc.):</i>			
Emergency Contact Person #1: Telephone Number(s) for Emergency Contact: Relationship to Student:			
Emergency Contact Person #1: Telephone Number(s) for Emergency Contact: Relationship to Student:			

***PARENT/GUARDIAN:** As custodial parent and/or legal guardian, I hereby consent to the participation of my son/daughter in the St. John's Lutheran Church (SJLC) event noted below. I understand this form provides permission for my student to participate in a special program-related event held at a location other than the church grounds of SJLC Church. I understand that private or public transportation may be provided. I understand that SJLC, in compliance with the South-Central Wisconsin Synod of the ELCA requirements, has taken proper precautionary steps to help assure my child's safety. FURTHER, as parent/legal guardian, I remain fully responsible for any actions taken by the above named student—including disruptive or dangerous behavior that may necessitate a phone call requesting I retrieve my child immediately. Having such reassurances, I hereby hold harmless SJLC, the South-Central Wisconsin Synod of the ELCA, its officers, directors and agents, and all employees and chaperons associated with this event. FINALLY, in the event of an emergency, I hereby give permission to transport my child to a hospital for emergency treatment or surgery.

 Parent/Legal Guardian's Name (Please Print) Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature Date

***STUDENT:** As a SJLC student or invited guest, I agree to (a) Follow all the rules of the event, (b) Adhere to all staff and volunteer requests and (c) Refrain from behaviors I know to be disruptive/dangerous/disrespectful. If I choose to ignore any of these, even after I've been warned, I understand that my parent/guardian or emergency contact will be phoned immediately to retrieve me from the event.

 Student's Name (Please Print) Student's Signature Date

St. John's Lutheran Church
Sunday School Registration Form

(Please use for all students ages 3 and up)

Child's Name	Grade	Date of Birth

Are there any medical issues (e.g. food allergies) we should be made aware of?

Name of Parent(s):
Address:
Phone Number:
Email Address:

St. John's Lutheran Church
Youth Activity Registration Form

(For onsite youth events only – for offsite/overnight activities, please use medical release)

Child's Name	Grade	Date of Birth

Are there any medical issues (e.g. food allergies) we should be made aware of?

Name of Parent(s):
Address:
Phone Number:
Email Address: