

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

**Child**

**&**

**Youth**

**Safety Policy**

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
Child and Youth Safety Policy**

*A designate of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church Council, Children's Ministry team leader, and the senior pastor shall comprise an administrative body referred to as "The Child and Youth Safety Committee" [hereinafter "Committee"]. The Committee's purpose shall be to guide the house of worship in promulgating and enforcing policies, procedures, and practices concerning the safety of our children/youth when in the care of paid and volunteer child and youth workers at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church [hereinafter "Policy"]. The Committee is empowered to select a chairperson and adopt such rules as is appropriate to execute the purposes expressed in this Policy. Replacement committee members designated from a house of worship Committee shall be selected by that Committee. The Emmanuel Lutheran Church Council will confirm this Committee and its members.*

**MISSION STATEMENT**

It is in the best interest of our house of worship, our children, and our youth to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist our house of worship in protecting the physical, mental, and emotional well being of the children and youth who participate in house of worship sponsored activities at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Volunteers or paid staff with convictions of abuse crimes will not be permitted to work with children or youth. The kinds of convicted criminal behavior which disqualify an applicant include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: 1) Child molestation, 2) Incest, 3) Rape, 4) Assaults involving minors, 5) Physical abuse of a child, and 6) Child pornography.

*It is with this mission in mind that the Committee proposes the following policies, procedures, and practices.*

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The Emmanuel Lutheran Church Council, with the input from house of worship leaders and staff, has explored the need for child and youth safety policies, procedures, and practices. It determined that, given the size of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, the wide range of house of worship sponsored activities involving our children and youth, and the overarching care and concern this house of worship has for its children and youth, a safety policy is indicated. The following Policy seeks to address that need.

### **EMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY**

The Emmanuel Lutheran Church, through its people, believe it is in our house of worship's, our children's, and our youths' best interests to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist in protecting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our children and youth when they participate in house of worship sponsored activities. These policies, practices, and procedures proceed from the following core decisions:

1. Adults convicted of sexually or physically abusing a child will not be accepted for volunteer or paid service in any house of worship sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this house of worship family. Individuals who have such a history shall discuss their desire to work with children or youth with the senior pastor or associate pastor prior to engaging in any volunteer or paid service. The Christian Education Director will be involved at the option of the senior pastor or associate pastor.
3. A volunteer or paid staff member must have lived in this community for one (1) year and provide references indicating he or she is a person of good standing in this community. In the event the volunteer or paid staff member is a new member of constituent, he or she must provide at least two (2) references, including his or her previous pastor, indicating the volunteer's or paid staff member's good community standing for at least one (1) year in the previous community.
4. At least two (2) non-related adults (over the age of 21) will be assigned to and be present at all house of worship sponsored activities involving children or youth. If youth helpers are conducting house of worship sponsored activities, at least one (1) adult (over the age of 21) must be assigned to and be present at that activity. "Youth helpers" are defined as youths under the age of 18 and who have successfully completed the screening process set forth in this Policy.
5. Youth helpers or youth teachers must present written parental/guardian permission to the adult supervisor before being authorized to work with children.
6. Volunteers and paid staff members must submit a completed application form at the inception of their service and in January of every calendar year ending with "5" or "0" thereafter. In addition, each must agree to training and be trained in accordance with the procedures set forth by the Committee before being authorized to work with children or youth in house of worship sponsored activities.

## GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### I. Administration of Policies and Procedures

The Committee shall administer the policies and procedures herein. The Emmanuel Lutheran Church Council will approve this original policy and any future revisions.

### II. Volunteer and Paid Staff Worker Selection Policies

#### A. Screening

1. *Risk Management for an Occasional Volunteer and Paid Staff Worker*
  - a. **Occasional volunteers and paid staff include:** Individuals who volunteer or work in a classroom with a group of children infrequently as a parent/guardian or youth helper or substitute.
    - (1) **Occasional volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:**
    - (2) They complete the Application Form (**Appendix A**); and
    - (3) They satisfactorily meet the criteria set forth in the application
2. *Risk Management for Volunteers and Paid Staff Workers of Regular On-Going Child or Youth Settings*
  - a. **Regular volunteers and paid staff include:** Individuals who volunteer or work and are paid on a weekly or monthly basis for 1 to 1-1/2 hours.
    - (1) **Regular volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:**
    - (2) They complete the Application Form (**Appendix A**); and
    - (3) They are a member for at least one (1) year with references; or
    - (4) They are an active, participating non-member (constituent\_ for at least one (1) year with references; or
    - (5) They become members on Confession of Faith after 6 months and provide two (2) references, one from their former pastor, indicating their good community standing in their previous community for one (1) year; and
    - (6) They transfer or become an associate member after 6 months and provide two (2) references, one from their former pastor, indicating their good community standing in their previous community for one (1) year; and
    - (7) They participate in a personal interview with a house of worship staff member or with the committee responsible for recruitment (this shall be a personal one-on-one interview).
3. *Risk Management for Volunteer and Paid Staff Workers for Special Events with Higher Probability of Risk*
  - a. For all purposes in this Policy, "infants" are defined as being under the age of 4; "children" are defined as being between the age of 4 and 12; and "youths" are defined as being ages 12 to 18.
    - (1) **High Risk Volunteers and Paid Staff include:**
      - (a) Positions which involve working with infants 1 to 1-1/2 hours weekly; or
      - (b) Supervision of off-campus or overnight activities; or
      - (c) One-on-one situations alone with individual children/youth; or
      - (d) Driving children or youth to activities off campus
    - (2) **High Risk Volunteers and Paid Staff will qualify if:**
      - (a) They complete the Application Form (**Appendix A**); and
      - (b) They permit a criminal records check; and
      - (c) They indicate prior positive experience, skill, training, or work related to children and/or youth; and

- (d) They have a positive personal interview with an authorized house of worship staff member and one (1) other person or authorized members of the Committee or the recruiting committee.
- 4. *Satisfactory Completion of Screening Requires:*
  - a. No known history or criminal record of or relating to child abuse or molestation or other findings of a criminal record involving injury to another; and
  - b. Positive references; and
  - c. Experience working with children or satisfactory demonstration of ability to learn and understand the position for which the individual applies; and
  - d. Membership or constituency in the Emmanuel Lutheran Church as set forth above; and
  - e. Successful completion of a personal interview (interview does not reveal information of concern to interview team).
- 5. *Unsatisfactory Completion of Screening and Exclusion from Service with Children or Youth includes:*
  - a. Prior history, conviction, *Alford plea (nolo contendere)*, or guilty plea for child abuse or molestation;
  - b. Other findings of a criminal record;
  - c. Negative personal reference or interview: (evaluation on a case-by-case basis, with additional references, interview or follow-up information sought to confirm or disprove suspicions as necessary).

Individuals who do not satisfactorily pass screening may be offered opportunities to volunteer their services or work as paid staff in other areas of the organization. Pastoral guidance and counseling should be offered to these individuals to assist them in understanding the house of worship's obligation to provide the highest level of protection to its children, its youth, and its members.

#### **A. Authorization of Approved Volunteers and Paid Staff**

- 1. Volunteers and paid staff may be authorized, **upon successfully completing screening**, to work with children/youth in activities where there will be two (2) or more non-related adults (such as Sunday school class, vacation bible school, summer camp, choir, after school programs, Sunday evening fellowship, Youth Program, Confirmation, and etc.).
- 2. Volunteers and paid staff for high risk settings may be authorized, upon successful completion of screening, to work with children and youth in the following settings:
  - a. Any overnight activity with youth/children (e.g. lock-ins, camping trips, choir trips);
  - b. Any one-on-one activities or sessions with a child or youth
  - c. Any work with infants; and
  - d. Any positions involving transporting children or youth for any distance.

### **III. Worker Supervision Policies**

#### **A. Team Approach**

House of worship activities involving children and youth will be supervised or conducted by two (2) non-related adults, or one adult (21 or over) and a non-related youth helper.

#### **B. Parental/Guardian Permission**

Any time a paid staff member or volunteer is required to be alone with a child or youth, parental/guardian permission should be obtained. If contact with a parent/guardian

cannot be made, another adult should be notified. Religious education registration forms will provide a place for parents/guardians to give signed approval for their child to be alone with a teacher or with a Faith Friend, if the youth is in religion class. Parental/guardian permission forms will be made available for other house of worship sponsored settings enabling parents/guardians to approve their child being alone with a teacher or leader.

**C. Overnight Rule**

Only volunteers or paid staff members who have been authorized for high risk positions will be allowed to chaperone overnight activities.

**D. Nursery Identification**

1. All infants will be signed into a designated room anytime they are left in the nursery room(s) for any child care activity (Sunday or other times child care is offered).
2. Parents/guardians will be given a claim check at the time they leave their child.
3. A parent/guardian can only pick up a child when a claim check is presented.
4. Youth nursery attendants must have written parental/guardian permission for supervising children.

**E. Children in Classrooms Shall be Visible from Outside the Classroom**

Children participating in indoor activities in classrooms should be visible from outside the classroom. If a door does not have a window, the door should be left open and be gated, if necessary. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

**F. Prohibited Behaviors**

1. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not place himself or herself in a situation where he or she is alone with a child absent proper parental/guardian authority.
2. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not use profanity, vulgarities, or emotionally abusive language, drugs or alcohol.
3. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not strike, hit, spank, or otherwise physically abuse a child or youth.
4. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not touch, fondle, or kiss a child or youth or physically or verbally engage in any inappropriate or sexual manner with a child or youth.

**IV. Incident Reporting**

**All allegations of incidents involving improper touching, physical abuse, or sexual abuse of a child or youth during the course of any and all house of worship sponsored activities must immediately be brought to the attention of the senior pastor, or if he or she is not available, to the associate pastor, or, if he or she is not available, to the Committee attorney, or, if he or she is not available, to any member of the Committee, except that if the alleged perpetrator is within this reporting chain, that person shall be by-passed and the report shall be made to another individual or individuals in this reporting chain.**

The reporting person shall:

1. Inform the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above, if he or she has not already been informed.
2. Assist the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above in investigating the allegation following the Incident Report guidelines.
3. Cooperate with the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above in insuring that the Incident Report **Appendix D** (the senior pastor has these forms) is completed and properly executed. **The person signing the report will be**

**trained to know that he or she**, the senior pastor or the individual in the authority chain as set forth above, is responsible to see that proper notification is made to the following: parents/guardians, legal and social welfare authorities as may be mandated by state law, insurance company (in accordance with the insurance contract), or other authorities. The person notified should assist to insure that the proper procedure is followed and the necessary notification made, but because the person notified is not bound by this Policy, the person making the notification should clearly request all appropriate assistance to make sure the proper notification procedure is followed.

#### **V. Response to Allegations**

It will be the policy of Emmanuel Lutheran Church to deal with all allegations of improper conduct involving children and youth with respect and dignity for all parties involved. Emmanuel Lutheran Church will remain unbiased and supportive to all parties involved, recognizing that incidents of abuse allegations are devastating to both the accuser and the accused. Therefore, the above policies and incident reporting will be carried out tactfully, discreetly, and without bias on the part of the reporting agent.

Upon learning of the allegation of sexual abuse by any employee or volunteer of the house of worship, the Committee shall take steps to see that the person making the allegation is provided with information concerning:

1. the process of inquiry the Committee will follow; and
  2. the availability/identity of counselors experienced in working with victims of abuse.
- All reasonable attempts will be made to keep reports of allegations of misconduct confidential. Reporting agents will be instructed to maintain the confidentiality of all parties, to the extent allowed by law, with the following required reporting exceptions:

1. Parents/guardians
2. Legal and social welfare authorities
3. House of worship insurance and legal counsel