

House of Worship
Insurance Package

Child and Youth Protection Policies



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INTRODUCTION

It is in the best interest of Ascension Lutheran Church and its children/youth to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist Ascension Lutheran Church in protecting the children/youth from physical, mental, and emotional harm.

It will be the responsibility of Ascension Lutheran Church to educate ministers, house of worship staff, and volunteers in the identification and prevention of sexual and physical misconduct. In many cases, sexual or physical misconduct will violate criminal statutes and may lead to the prosecution and imprisonment of offenders.

The Ascension Lutheran Church will establish a policy of zero tolerance for sexual or physical misconduct and should aggressively pursue investigation of reports of misconduct.

The information provided in this document includes items that Ascension Lutheran Church has considered as adopted procedures. There are some guidelines that can establish clear directions, but the information is general and allows Ascension Lutheran Church to expand upon or develop specific content of policies and procedures that can be implemented according to the particularities of Ascension Lutheran Church.

The information contained in this document is not all inclusive and the information adopted is in accordance with Ascension Lutheran Church's religious beliefs and activities.

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHILD
&
YOUTH
SAFETY POLICY

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH-WATERLOO, IA CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

The Executive Board and the Senior Pastor shall comprise as an administrative body referred to as “The Child and Youth Safety Committee” [hereinafter “Committee”]. This ad hoc Committee’s purpose shall be to guide Ascension Lutheran Church 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 Ascension Lutheran Church [hereinafter “Policy”]. The Committee is empowered to adopt such rules as is appropriate to execute the purposes expressed in this Policy. Additional Committee members shall be selected by Executive Board of Ascension Lutheran Church. An attorney may be retained by the senior pastor to review the policy if desired.

MISSION STATEMENT

It is in the best interest of Ascension Lutheran Church, our children, and our youth to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist Ascension Lutheran Church in protecting the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of the children and youth who participate in sponsored activities at Ascension 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 Ascension Lutheran Church proposes the following policies, procedures, and practices.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Child and Youth Safety Committee, with the input from volunteers and staff, has explored the need for child and youth safety policies, procedures, and practices. It determined that, given the size of Ascension Lutheran Church, the wide range of sponsored activities involving our children and youth, and the overarching care and concern for its children and youth, a safety policy is indicated. The following Policy seeks to address that need.

Ascension Lutheran Church CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

Ascension Lutheran Church, through its people, believe that it is in 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 Ascension Lutheran Church 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 Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the Ascension Lutheran Church family.
3. A volunteer or paid staff member must have lived in this community for one (1) year and must 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 or constituent (non-member), 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 Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities involving children or youth, if possible. If youth helpers are conducting Ascension Lutheran Church 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 Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities.

VOLUNTEER & PAID STAFF SELECTION

1. A screening policy shall be adopted by Ascension Lutheran Church for screening of employees and volunteer applicants wishing to participate in activities involving children or youth.
2. An application form for all volunteers and paid staff shall be required. (See **Appendix B**) This form shall include questions as they relate to the individual's previous work with children and youth, the reason for wanting to work with children and youth, their area of interest in working with children and youth, etc.
3. Prior to implementing applications and reference check forms used by Ascension Lutheran Church, they may be reviewed by legal counsel familiar with Iowa state employment laws.
4. An individual shall have lived in the community for 1 year and provide references that they are a person of good standing in the community.
5. If the individual is new to the community or a new member, before working with children or youth, they must provide at least 2 references, including his/her previous pastor, indicating the member's good community standing for at least 1 year in the previous community. References shall be checked and documented.
6. The volunteer or paid staff person shall have an in-person interview. This interview shall be conducted by the Senior Pastor and one other person on the committee within Ascension Lutheran Church.
7. Background records shall be checked and documented. Those records may include, but are not limited to, criminal records, sex offender registry, child abuse registry, etc.
8. Those convicted of sexual or physical abuse shall not be accepted for volunteer or paid service at any Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
9. Ascension Lutheran Church shall provide annual training to all Ascension Lutheran Church staff and volunteers, focusing on Ascension Lutheran Church policies and practices in the Child and Youth Safety Policy and be trained on other current issues related to child and youth protection. Attendance at these sessions shall be required for those who have direct contact with children or youth.
10. Volunteer and paid staff shall be required to sign a statement that they have read and understood, and also agree to abide by, Ascension Lutheran Church's Child and Youth Safety Policy. (See **Appendix C**)
11. Volunteers and paid staff are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.

POLICIES/SUPERVISION WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

1. At least two (2) non-related adults (over the age of 21) shall be assigned to and be present at all Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities involving children or youth, if possible.
2. Any youth helper or youth teacher (youth under the age of 18) must present written parental/guardian permission to the adult supervisor of the activity before being authorized to work with children or youth.
3. There shall be at least 2 non-related adults present in any classroom at all times, if possible.
4. Children participating in indoor activities in classrooms shall be visible from outside the classroom, if possible. If a door does not have a window, the door shall be left open and be gated, if possible. Doors will never be locked while persons are inside the room.
5. A volunteer or paid staff member shall not place themselves in a situation where they are alone with a child or youth, without proper parental/guardian authority.
6. Volunteers or staff of Ascension Lutheran Church may visit and observe children or youth programs at any time.
7. Anytime a paid staff member or volunteer is required to be alone with a child or youth, parental or guardian permission shall be obtained, if possible. If contact with a parent/guardian cannot be made, another adult should be notified. Only volunteers or paid staff members who have been authorized will be allowed to chaperone overnight activities.
8. Pre-school children needing to use the bathroom shall be accompanied by 2 adults, if possible. The adults may enter the bathroom, if the child needs assistance or supervision, but should not enter the stall with the child unless there is an emergency. If the child needs assistance or there is an emergency with any child, the stall door and bathroom door shall be left open.
9. A sign-in/sign-out procedure shall be established. Parents/guardians or other persons responsible for children from infant through 2nd grade will record via sign-in procedure on the nursery registration form with the staff/volunteer on duty as to whom the child may be released. If the person picking up the child is unknown to the staff/volunteer person, a picture ID shall be requested to verify the release person's identity. A child shall not be released to a person not previously authorized via the sign-in procedure, which shall be on the registration form. The sign-in procedure shall require an emergency contact number for parents/guardians. Also, the registration form shall note allergies or any special needs of the child.
10. In a nursery setting, always have a minimum of 2 non-related adults present when changing children's clothing, if possible.
11. Make certain there is enough help in the nursery to provide enough attention to each child's needs.
12. An appointed monitor, if available, should check each nursery room to make sure it is properly staffed and that things are running smoothly. This person may also monitor hallways for unwanted visitors and help supervise restroom breaks.
13. A communications system shall be established to call the parent/guardian to the nursery during worship or Ascension Lutheran Church activities.

14. Children and youth must have completed an information and consent form for involvement in Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored programs and activities away from the Ascension Lutheran Church location. The person in charge of each trip and/or retreat shall carry completed medical release forms, including permission for emergency medical care, including medication prescribed, and information on how to reach a parent/guardian in an emergency.
15. The following rules shall apply when transportation by volunteers or paid staff is being provided for children or youth for designated Ascension Lutheran Church activities from the church to the Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored event and back:
 - a. The designated leader of the event shall not permit any adult to drive who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - b. The driver must be at least 21 years of age and have a clear driving record.
 - c. The driver must have proof of insurance, if their personal vehicle is used.
 - d. Parents/guardians must complete written permission forms before Ascension Lutheran Church personnel transport children and youth for an Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activity or for any purpose.
 - e. The driver shall have read and signed an acknowledgment indicating that the Child and Youth Safety Policy has been read and will be followed.
 - f. A copy of the valid driver's license and insurance card shall be filed with the Ascension Lutheran Church Office Administrator, before a driver is approved to drive on Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

1. All allegations of incidents involving improper touching, physical abuse, or sexual abuse of a child or youth during the course of any and all Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities must be immediately brought to the attention of the Child and Youth Safety Committee chairman. Exception: if the alleged perpetrator is within this reporting chain, that person shall be bypassed and the report made to another individual or individuals in the reporting chain. (See **Appendix D** for the Incident Report form).
2. If an incident is reported, it is the responsibility of the Committee chairman or other individual in the authority chain to see that proper notification is made to the following: parents/guardian, legal and social welfare authorities as may be mandated by state law, and insurance company (in accordance with the insurance contract).
3. All allegations of sexual misconduct shall be fully and fairly investigated and corrective and/or disciplinary action taken as warranted.
4. Ascension Lutheran Church shall not attempt to perform a detailed investigation of any alleged incident on its own, but shall cooperate fully with all legal entities involved.
5. Individuals who do not satisfactorily pass the screening shall be excluded from service and/or contact with children or youth, but may be offered opportunities of other service with Ascension Lutheran Church. Consideration shall be given for pastoral guidance and counseling to assist the individual in understanding Ascension Lutheran Church's duty to provide the highest level of protection to its children, its youth, and to the members of Ascension Lutheran Church.

Appendix A

[THIS POLICY SHALL BE ATTACHED TO THE APPLICATION FORM]

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Administration of Policies and Procedures

The Committee and Senior Pastor shall administer the policies and procedures herein. The Ascension Lutheran Church Board and congregation 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.

Occasional volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:

- (1) They complete the Application Form (**Appendix B**); and
- (2) 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.

Regular volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:

- (1) They complete the Application Form (**Appendix B**); and
- (2) They are a member for at least one (1) year with references; or
- (3) They are an active, participating non-member (constituent) for at least one (1) year with references; or
- (4) They become members after 6 months and provide two (2) references, one from their former Pastor (if possible), indicating their good community standing in their previous community for one (1) year; or
- (5) They transfer 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; or
- (6) They participate in a personal interview with the Senior Pastor and one other person on the committee (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 ages of 4 and 12; and “youths” are defined as being between the ages of 12 and 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 (over 100 miles).
 - (2) **High Risk Volunteers and Paid Staff will qualify if:**
 - (a) They complete the Application Form (**Appendix B**); 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 Ascension Lutheran Church 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 applied; and
 - d. Membership or constituency in Ascension 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 in other areas of the church. Pastoral guidance and counseling should be offered to these individuals to assist them in understanding Ascension Lutheran Church’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.), if possible.

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.

III. Worker Supervision Policies

A. Team Approach

Ascension Lutheran Church activities involving children and youth shall be supervised or conducted by two (2) non-related adults, or one adult (21 or over) and a non-related youth helper (if possible).

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 shall be obtained (if possible). If contact with a parent/guardian cannot be made, another adult should be notified. Religious education registration forms shall provide a place for parents/guardians to give signed approval for their child to be alone with an approved adult during religion class. Parental/guardian permission forms shall be made available for other Ascension Lutheran Church 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 shall 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 sign out at the time they leave their child.
3. A parent/guardian can only pick up a child when recognized by the Nursery attendant.
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 shall be visible from outside the classroom, if possible. If a door does not have a window, the door may be left open or be gated, if possible. Doors shall 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 of proper parental/guardian authority during Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities.
2. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not use profanity, vulgarities, or emotionally abusive language, drugs or alcohol during Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities.
3. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not strike, hit, spank, or otherwise physically abuse a child or youth during Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities.
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 Ascension Lutheran Church sponsored activities must immediately be brought to the attention of the Committee chairman, or if he is not available, to the Church 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 Committee chairman or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above, if he has not already been informed.
2. Assist the Committee chairman or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above in investigating the allegation following the Incident Report guidelines.
3. Cooperate with the committee chairman or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above in insuring that the Incident Report **Appendix D** (the Church Office will have these forms) is completed and properly executed. The **person signing the report shall be trained to know that he or she**, the Committee chairman 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 shall clearly request all appropriate assistance to make sure the proper notification procedure is followed.

V. Response to Allegations

It shall be the policy of Ascension Lutheran Church to deal with all allegations of improper conduct involving children and youth with respect and dignity for all parties involved. Ascension 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 Ascension Lutheran Church, 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 shall be made to keep reports of allegations of misconduct confidential. Reporting agents shall 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. Ascension Lutheran Church insurance and legal counsel

Appendix B

VOLUNTEER OR PAID STAFF APPLICATION

Screening for Volunteer and Paid Staff Working with Children and Youth
Ascension Lutheran Church-Waterloo, Iowa

Indicate areas in which you are interested:

- SS Teacher Staff Church Helper Music Leader Youth Fellowship
 Music Leader Youth Leader Youth Counselor Overnight Counselor Transportation
 Nursery AWANA Leader Youth/Child Volunteer
 Other _____

Date: _____ Social Security No. _____ Date of Birth: _____

Name: _____
(Please print)

Current address: _____ Phone: _____
(Please print)

Employer: _____ Phone: _____

Length of current employment _____ Supervisor: _____

List current Volunteer activities:	Day(s) and time(s)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Do you have any training/certification in first aid or CPR? Yes No

Date of last certificate issued: _____

Have you been or are you currently serving as a paid staff or volunteer worker with children or youth in which you have already undergone and met screening requirements? Yes No

If "yes", with whom? _____

Valid (State) Drivers license and clean driving record? Yes No If "yes", license number: _____

Have you ever been convicted or pleaded guilty of a criminal offense against a person? Yes No If yes, please explain (if you wish to speak with a member of the professional church staff, please indicate). A "yes" necessitates a criminal records check.

Church History and Prior Experience

Date of membership at Ascension Lutheran Church _____

If not a member, how long have you been attending? _____

If not a member, list other church affiliation: _____

Volunteer or staff activities at Ascension Lutheran Church: _____

List or check below all other child care, teaching or other child/youth work you have been involved in on either a paid or volunteer basis:

Check areas of experience: SS teaching Nursery Choir Bells Youth Program

After school programs Child care Overnights Substitute YBS Camp Room parent

Weekday helper SS superintendent Small groups

Other; Explain: _____

State the position for which you are applying: _____

List the factors that you believe prepares you for the position: _____

Please state the day and time you are available: _____

References

Do you have any physical limitations you believe prevent you from doing certain types of activities? Yes No

If "yes", please explain _____

At least one of these references should be an Ascension Lutheran Church member. If you have been a member or attended this church for 1 year or less, one of your references should be the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor(s) from the church where you were a member before coming to this community.

Name: _____ Position: _____

Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is current 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 children or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Ascension Lutheran Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of any kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and Policies of Ascension Lutheran Church.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE, I KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF IT, AND I SIGN THE RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. I understand that this is a legally binding agreement.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, Iowa

ACCEPTANCE OF POLICY

By signing this document, I am stating that I have read and understand the Child and Youth Safety Policy of Ascension Lutheran Church.

I further agree that I accept it and will abide by it. If incidence of child abuse or criminal activity is proved, I understand my role as volunteer and/or paid staff member will be terminated.

Signature of Staff or Volunteer

Signature of Witness

Printed Name of Staff or Volunteer

Printed Name of Witness

Date

Date

Appendix D

INCIDENT REPORT

Date of report: _____

Name of person(s) issuing this report: _____

Alleged perpetrator(s): _____

Witness(es): _____

Date, time, and location of incident: _____

Written description of incident: _____

- I am a mandatory reporter.
- I choose to remain anonymous regarding this incident.
- I have reported or intend to report this incident to criminal authorities.

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS FREELY PROVIDED AND IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Signature of person generating this report

Signature of person issuing this report to the receiving person (may be same as above)

Signature of person receiving this report