

Child Risk Management

A Policy to Ensure Safety in Ministry

with

Children and Youth

for

St. Paul Lutheran Church/School, Luxemburg, WI

Rationale

We the members of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, Wisconsin, seek to honor God and our commitment to educating children and youth. Christ declares in Mark 10:13-14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Our congregation has resolved to provide a secure, safe, nurturing environment for the instruction and participation of children and youth. This policy has been established to protect all who participate in child and youth ministry, which includes but is not limited to children, youth, volunteers, paid ministry staff and the church family. These guidelines are to be followed by every individual who serves in our ministry to minors.

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Guiding Principles

What protects our children and youth also serves to protect our church from unfounded charges and legal liability. In no way will we allow these policies to interfere with our service of Christ; rather, they will enhance our Christian service. We are motivated because we are entrusted with the spiritual, educational and moral development of our children and youth. We are dedicated to providing an environment that nurtures the dignity and safety of each person and where healthy and appropriate relationships between all individuals are encouraged and expected.

Child abuse and sexual misconduct can tear the fabric of relationships within the church. These acts are reprehensible and an affront to our Heavenly Father and the mission of the church cannot be achieved when such hurt is inflicted. It is prudent to prevent such injuries and occurrences and to have a clear plan of action and response should an allegation be made. Abuse of any kind is not to be tolerated.

The Lord gives us guidance in Scripture:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” Genesis 1:26-27

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.” 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.” 1 Corinthians 6:19

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.” 1 John 5:1

“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.’” Luke 17:1-3a

Principles

There are four principles that should guide decisions and actions regarding appropriate risk management:

Principle 1. As risk increases, supervision should also increase.

Therefore, more supervision is required for a youth overnight lock-in than a Sunday School class, for example.

Principle 2. Risk increases as isolation increases.

Therefore, care must be taken in such things as when and where an activity is held, and whether doors are open or closed.

Principle 3. Risk increases as accountability decreases.

Therefore, workers should be screened and must obtain approval in advance before sponsoring any activity.

Principle 4. Risk increases when there is an imbalance of power and control (age, size, position, authority).

Therefore, care must be taken to maintain a proper age balance between children.

Approximately 25% of abuse cases are children molesting children. There is an especially high risk when there is a difference of 5 years or more among children's ages.

Definition of Terms

Abuse – any form of conduct that is unlawful, contrary to the moral instructions and doctrines of the church, and/or causes injury to another person directly or indirectly

Emotional Abuse – any attempt to control another person's life through words, threats, fears, and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God-given sense of self-worth

Physical Abuse – any non-accidental act that violates the dignity of the image of God in another person, inflicting dehumanizing pain or injury. Physically abusive behavior also includes physical neglect, which is failure to do what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care.

Sexual Abuse – any sexual experience forced on one person by another, which may or may not involve physical contact between people. Sexual abuse also includes any role inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time.

Verbal Abuse - any victim who is targeted by name calling, angry outbursts, screaming rages, sarcasm and cool indifference.

Child Abuse – any form of intentional or malicious infliction of injury to the detriment of the physical, moral, or mental well-being of a minor

Church – St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, WI

CCT – Communication in Crisis Team – the team consists of the Principal, Pastor, and members of the Board of Christian Education.

Minor (sometimes “children and youth”) – any person under the age of 18

Personnel (sometimes “worker”) – any volunteer, employee, church worker, principal, or pastor working in or on behalf of the congregation of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, WI

Level I – any church/school personnel working independently with children and youth, without supervision

Level II – any church/school personnel working with and under supervision of a Level I worker. (Example: teens helping with Vacation Bible School)

Supervisory board – the group responsible for a given ministry within the structure of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, WI

Supervisory role – any adult in charge of a specified event or activity

Volunteer – any service rendered by a person when no monetary compensation is given.

The Policy

St. Paul Lutheran Church and School will engage in child risk management strategies in the selection of church/school workers, both paid and volunteer, who work with children and youth.

Securing Adult Workers (age 18 and over)

Paid staff and long-term substitute teachers shall have a thorough background check done on them every five years using a site such as Protect My Ministry.

Short-term substitute teachers, drivers for school events, coaches, etc. will also have a background check performed on them using the Wisconsin Court System Circuit Court Access website and/or a similar site(s).

The results of these background checks will be used in hiring individuals, renewing/nonrenewing staff, and determining who can/cannot participate with school functions. Determining what actions are appropriate/inappropriate will be at the discretion of the administrator and the Board of Christian Education.

For Workers Under the Age of 18

With employee applicants and volunteers under the age of 18, it is not permissible to do background checks. Workers under the age of 18 who work with children and youth in Level I is subject to approval by the principal.

Disqualifying Offenses

No prospective paid or volunteer worker who has prior convictions of sexual misconduct or child abuse will be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with children and youth in the ministries of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School.

Authorized Access to Information and Storage

Confidential forms and reports from background checks and references will be seen only by members of the CCT. All records will be kept in a secure and locked location separate from personnel files within the office of the Principal until they are destroyed.

Guidelines for Ministry to Minors

Leadership in the children and youth ministries of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School is responsible for sharing the following guidelines with paid and volunteer personnel and monitoring their compliance.

1. No worker will be accepted who has prior convictions of sexual misconduct or child abuse. A worker must report to the CCT if accusations have been raised concerning their conduct.
2. No Level I volunteer shall be allowed independent direct interaction with children and youth until said person has been known to the Pastor/Principal or to the staff person responsible for the ministry. Level I volunteer refers to any church/school personnel working independently with children and youth, without supervision.
3. Report to the Principal any instances or allegations made.

Supervision of Minors

1. All children should be properly supervised when present in the building. Parents and workers should not leave children unattended or let them wander the building without proper adult supervision.
2. All off-campus activities, special events, outings, field trips, and extra-curricular activities require parental permission slips. Signed permission slips must be gathered by the adult worker coordinating the activity.
3. Personnel in supervisory roles shall document any incidents which could be perceived as sexual misconduct or child abuse, being sure to record times, dates, circumstances, witnesses and any other such information as might be helpful in a follow-up investigation.

Procedures with Minors

1. All regular children's program workers must complete and sign a **Child Risk Screening Form** and be approved before working with our children and youth.
2. One light must remain on at all times in a room and a clear view of classroom interior.
3. The "rule of 3" should be followed whenever possible. At least two students and one adult or two adults and one student should be present in a room together.
4. Parents should meet their children in the classroom or location of the activity or event. Workers should not leave children unattended.
5. Transportation to and from events is the responsibility of the families. During events, drivers should avoid dropping off or picking up minors without being accompanied by another adult. The Administrative Staff will set standards for who is permitted to drive during events. Any deviations should have the prior consent of the parent and be reported to the next person in the line of responsibility.
6. There are no "secret" activities or organizations recognized by St. Paul Lutheran Church and School. Parents are welcome to observe their child in any class or activity. As a courtesy to our personnel, we ask that parents inform the supervising adult of their desire to observe, prior to the beginning of the activity. Parents should not disrupt or interfere with the activity.
7. Topics, vocabulary and attire that could not be used or worn comfortably in the presence of parents should not be employed with children and youth.
8. Alcohol should not be used by adult supervisors prior to or during activities scheduled with children and youth. Alcohol is not permitted to be provided to anyone under age 21.
9. All workers should use good judgment when having physical contact with children and youth. Workers are cautioned not to touch minors in any way that would appear intimate, threatening or frightening. Minors should not be forced to give physical contact such as kisses, hugs or sitting on an adult's lap. Children and youth are not to be intimidated, grabbed forcibly, shaken or struck.
10. A worker must maintain a professional posture, avoiding emotional attachment and remaining aware of a child's powerful attraction to persons in authority and trust.

12. If a worker suspects that a minor is in an unsafe or abusive home he/she must report it immediately to a supervisory church/school official. Also, if the need is there, a worker is to report the information to the proper authorities.
13. If a worker is seen endangering a child or acting inappropriately, a church/school official must be contacted immediately.
14. At the time of registration, parents will be given an opportunity to decline having their child photographed for use in publications or displays.

Child Risk Incident Response Plan

All professional staff involved in the care of minors are required to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Family Services (Kewaunee County Human Services, Dept. of Child Protective Services - 920-388-7030 or 388-7109). A report must be filed when:

1. There is reason to believe that a child may be abused or neglected.
2. Information is received that a child may be abused or neglected.

Volunteer workers must report to professional staff when there is suspicion that a minor with whom they have had contact in their working capacity has been subjected to abuse or neglect. This includes any incident of suspected child abuse that takes place at St. Paul Lutheran Church and School.

Reporting Protocol

When an incident of any sort occurs during the course of a church/school sponsored activity, it is the policy of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School to take the following steps.

1. Respond promptly to any injury, whether due to an accident or interpersonal activity.
2. Assess whether medical assistance is required. Treat the injury or get immediate medical assistance.
3. Notify the victim's parents.
4. Complete an Accident Report immediately after completing numbers 1-3 above, and file it with the appropriate church/school official.
5. Complete a Confidential Incident Report if there is evidence of sexual, physical or emotional abuse. This form must be completed immediately by a first-person source and filed with the Administrative Staff.

Communication in Crisis Team

The church/school appointed Communication in Crisis Team (CCT) will respond promptly to any allegations of abuse or misconduct where there is reason to believe such abuse has occurred, taking the following actions.

1. Interview all involved parties and seek to establish the facts in order to determine the next course of action.

2. Relieve the alleged offender immediately of any duties. Refer the person for appropriate medical/psychological evaluation and intervention if such allegations are supported by sufficient evidence. Should the CCT's investigation determine that the reported conduct does not fall within the stated definitions of child abuse or sexual misconduct but does potentially represent unprofessional or inappropriate conduct or conduct leading to an impression of impropriety, the individual may be served with a warning to guard against further incidents.
3. Comply fully with the obligations of civil law as regards to reporting the incident and cooperating with the investigation.
4. Reach out to the victims and their families and communicate sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.
5. Deal as openly as possible with the members of the church/school and the community, within the confines of respect for the privacy of the individuals involved.
6. Consider seeking outside assistance (i.e., legal counsel, psychologists, medical experts, etc.) to aid the CCT's investigation and follow-up.
7. Inform and update the individual and family bringing the accusation. Share the team's findings and follow-up actions.

The Media

Any news media inquiries regarding allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by church/school personnel should be directed to a designated member of the Communication in Crisis Team (CCT).

St. Paul Lutheran Church and School is committed to dealing openly and forthrightly with any such incident. At the same time, in light of the permanent harm that can result from such allegations, even if they ultimately prove to be unfounded, this church respects the strict confidentiality and privacy of all persons who are involved in such incidents. **Only the designated member of the Communication in Crisis Team should speak to the media.**

Policy Maintenance

Education

The policy and procedures outlined previously are applicable to all personnel who work with or on behalf of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School. This policy will be distributed to all church/school personnel by their immediate supervisor who will request a signed statement of the receipt, understanding and acceptance of these policies and procedures.

Administration

The leaders of our children and youth ministries are responsible for guiding workers through the child risk screening process and informing them of the guidelines of this policy. The leaders are responsible to their supervisor for compliance of these rules.

Review

A review of this **Child Risk Management Policy** will be undertaken every three years or as needed. The review committee should include members of the Communication in Crisis Team.

Confidential Child Risk Screening for

Adult Paid Employees and Volunteers (age 18 and over)
St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, Wisconsin

We desire to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth entrusted to our care. The following information will assist us in doing so.

Are you 18 years of age or older? _____ Yes _____ No

Name _____

Address/city/state/zip _____

Are you a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School? _____ Yes _____ No

If no, what church do you attend? _____

Please list all present or previous work involving children either paid or unpaid. Identify the institution and type of work. Also indicate any specialized training. (Example: CPR, first aid, lifeguarding, etc.). Use the back if needed.

Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to a charge of sexual or physical abuse of a minor? _____ Yes _____ No (If yes, please explain)

Please provide the name and telephone number of three individuals who are not related to you. These references should be able to describe you in a way that is relevant to your involvement in child and youth ministries.

1. _____ Phone _____

2. _____ Phone _____

3. _____ Phone _____

By signing below:

I certify that all of the information I have provided in the process of submitting this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

I voluntarily and knowingly authorize any person named herein as a contact to give St. Paul Lutheran Church and School any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and fully release and discharge all such contacts from liability for information provided.

I authorize St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, WI to do a background check through "Protect My Ministry", or any other approved provider.

I have read the Child Risk Management Policy of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School of Luxemburg, WI. I understand what is expected of me and I agree to comply with the policy and its procedures.

Signature

Date