



Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Albany, MN

CHILDREN/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Adopted by Council on: 4/28/15

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

Jesus' instruction is two-fold: that we let the children come to Him and that we not hinder them.

Introduction

To help protect the most vulnerable among us, *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* has adopted the following Child and Youth Protection Policy. It is important that all *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* paid Staff and Volunteers who have regular contact with youth understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent abuse of any kind against children.

Purpose

These policies exist to dictate appropriate behavior between *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* staff/volunteers and the children and youth involved in the ministries of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church*, as well as to assist *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth in order to:

1. To protect our children and their families from child abuse and/or sexual misconduct and to provide a safe environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors and paid staff.
2. To protect our Staff and Volunteers from false accusations of child abuse and/or sexual misconduct.
3. To protect our Ministry from false accusations of child abuse and/or sexual misconduct.
4. To provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.

Protection and Prevention

Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

All new job applicants for paid staff positions, and all volunteers that regularly have contact with children under the age of 18 at *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* will be asked to complete a background screening application. The Parish Office Coordinator will process the background check through IntelliCorp. The information will be available only to the Pastor and the Council President to be used exclusively for the purpose of the screening process. Information obtained through the screening process will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. The completed forms will be kept in a secure place.

On the job application the following question must be answered: "Has a lawsuit, claim, charge, arrest, been made against you for sexual misconduct, abuse, or molestation?"

Acceptable candidates will be notified when they are approved to work with children and youth at *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* and will be required to sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by *Our Savior's Lutheran Church's* Children/Youth Protection Policy.

If information of concern is reported on the screening form, employment application or through the background check, *other than those areas listed in the disqualification section below* does not *automatically* disqualify the applicant. The information will be discussed with the applicant and if the applicant is able to safely serve with restrictions this will be documented. (EXAMPLE: An applicant reports a 5 year old single arrest for DUI. A possible restriction might be that the applicant will not drive youth on activities).

Volunteers need not be members of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* provided they agree to abide by the policies outlined in this document.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by Minnesota state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by MN state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

Sexual Offender at Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Our Savior's Lutheran Church may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation but they must adhere to specific guidelines. However, first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children are present. Ask the probation/parole officer to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions don't prohibit participation, implement the following four (4) guidelines.

1. A known sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way;
2. A known sexual offender can only participate in predetermined events each week; and
3. A known sexual offender must report in and be assigned to a sponsor who will accompany him/her at all times at these events.
4. The identity of the sexual offender will be disclosed to the congregation.

Supervision of Children and Youth

Unless an extenuating situation exists, *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* will abide by the following:

Open door policy: Parents, volunteers, or staff of the Church may visit and observe child or youth programs at any time.

Parental Permission/Medical Release Rule: *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on activities off church grounds and will provide information regarding the activity. Copies of these forms will be kept with the primary chaperone of the activity.

Trips and Retreats: There shall be at least two adults present for all trips, retreats, and other times that children or youth gather at or away from the church building. (Three adults are preferred so that in the event of an emergency there will be adequate supervision.) There shall be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one adult will be present of the same gender as the children or youth. Parents will be made aware of housing accommodations. If there is two adults it is preferred that they not be related, by marriage or blood.

Buddy System: Children and youth will be directed to use a "buddy system" whenever on trips off of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* property.

Transportation: The following rules apply when transportation by volunteers is being provided for children or youth for designated church activities from *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* to a church sponsored event and back:

- The designated leader of the event must know the driver

- The designated leader of the event will not permit any adult to drive who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Driver must be 21 years of age
- Driver must have a valid Minnesota driver's license for the vehicle being operated
- Driver must have proof of insurance
- The driver must be accompanied by at least two children or youth in the vehicle
- Unless driver is the parent of a child being transported, the driver must be a screened volunteer or staff member of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church*

Controlled Substances: Volunteers and staff agree not to provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs (including legal prescription drugs), contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors. Volunteers and paid staff are also prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically designed for children or youth.

Touching: Volunteers and staff will avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.

Abuse: Volunteers and paid staff shall not physically discipline or abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority. Anyone who observes abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Report any inappropriate conduct to the proper authorities and officials of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* for handling.

Education and Training of Persons Who Work with Children and Youth

The church shall provide scheduled training (twice per year) focused on these policies and practices and other current issues related to child protection for those working with children and youth. Attendance at these sessions is required for those who have direct contact with children or youth in *Our Savior's Lutheran Church's* ministry. Each person will be required to take the training every 2 years.

Response to Sexual Abuse

Our Savior's Lutheran Church will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of sexual abuse. All accusations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously. The care and safety of the victim and family is our first priority. We are also concerned about any perpetrator being held responsible for his/her actions. *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* will not attempt to do a detailed investigation of any alleged incident on its own, but will cooperate fully with all legal authorities.

If there is a strong suspicion of child abuse, it will be reported to the Pastor or Council President, and a report of the facts known will be made promptly to the Stearns County Child Protective Services.

Any volunteer or staff who are “mandated reporters” under Minnesota law are requested to notify the Pastor or Council President when making a report on any incident or suspicion in which Our Savior’s Lutheran Church is implicated and to provide the Church with a copy of their report. If the allegation is made against the Pastor (s) or other rostered Ministers of the ELCA the Synod Bishop will be notified by the Congregational President.

The parent(s) or legal guardian of the victim will be notified by a staff member and steps taken to assure the safety of the child or youth until the parent(s) or guardian arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) or guardian do not wish the incident to be recorded. If the accused is a paid staff member, The Pastor will consult with the Church Council concerning whether to maintain or suspend his or her pay until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

The Pastor will consult with the Church Council as any investigation of an incident reported under this policy proceeds or is concluded regarding the status of the alleged perpetrator as a volunteer or staff member.

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church’s insurance company will be notified by the Council President.

At the conclusion of any official investigation, the Pastor and the Council President will be responsible to collect all materials related to any alleged incident of abuse and preserve that information *in Our Savior’s Lutheran Church’s* confidential files.

Any contact with the media regarding the reported abuse should be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the investigation’s conclusion would be premature.

During the investigation, the Pastor shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing. The Pastor shall also communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator (as long as the Pastor is not the alleged perpetrator).

In the event that the alleged perpetrator is a person who is named in this document as one to whom a report will be made or a person with another duty under this policy, the Council President (or Vice President if the President is the alleged perpetrator) shall be consulted to identify a substitute person to receive the report or carry out the duty.

Originally adopted by Congregational Council 12/12/2012
Adopted with adjustments by Congregational Council 4/28/2015



Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program Acknowledgement

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with children and youth. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with *Our Savior's Lutheran Church* or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church's* **Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program**. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of *Our Savior's Lutheran Church*.

Print Name

Signature

Date



Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Albany, MN

Background Reference Contact Form

(All applicant's applying for a position, paid/volunteer, that will have regular contact working with children or youth)

Name of Applicant: _____

Reference and/or Church contacted: _____

Council Person Contacting the Reference/Church: _____

Method of Contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation): _____

Summary of Conversation: (summarize the reference's remarks concerning the applicant's suitability for work with children and youth):

Name (printed)

Position

Signature

Date