

ST. ANDREW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

Effective _____
(Date)

The people of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church (the "Church") believe, in accordance with our Christian principles, that it is in the best interests of the Church and the children and youth of the Church to provide a safe environment for and protect the physical, mental and emotional well-being of the children and youth who participate in church-sponsored activities and programs.

Accordingly, the following policies, procedures and screening tools have been adopted in order to fulfill the above mission and also to protect the adults who work with the children and youth from being unfairly accused of any form of child abuse.

For the purposes of this policy, children and youth are all persons who are under the age of eighteen or who have not yet graduated from high school. The primary responsibility for the implementation, administration and monitoring of this policy will lie jointly with the Education Committee and the Family & Youth Committee of the Church. However, secondary responsibility for this policy will be with staff, volunteers and all members of the Church.

Primary Screening – Paid Staff

Primary screening is required for all paid staff hired subsequent to the effective date of this policy and who are involved with the supervision or custody of children and youth. Paid staff includes, but is not limited to, the following: Pastor and other clergy, Director of Family & Youth Ministries, and nursery attendant. In conjunction with and in addition to the normal hiring process, the primary screening process will include, but is not limited to, the following: completion of the *Child and Youth Screening Form* (see attached), a Department of Criminal Investigation check, and a check of the Iowa Sex Offender Registry and DHS Child Abuse Registry. Screening will be repeated annually.

Secondary Screening – Volunteers

Secondary screening is required for all non-paid volunteers involved with the supervision or custody of children and youth. This screening is required to be updated on an annual basis. Volunteers include, but are not limited to, the following: educational teachers, assistants, substitutes and superintendent; youth organization leaders; small group leaders; nursery volunteers; confirmation guides and mentors; youth choir director; chaperones of overnight trips and programs; and drivers to events. The completion of the *Child and Youth Screening Form* is a requirement of the secondary screening process and will be repeated annually. As deemed necessary, the secondary screening process may also include, but is not limited to, the following: a personal interview, a reference check, a Department of Criminal Investigation check, and a check of the Iowa Sex Offender Registry and DHS Child Abuse Registry.

Prior Record Rule

Adults who have been convicted and/or founded of either child sexual or physical abuse are not allowed to participate in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.

Six-Month Rule

All volunteers working with children and youth must have participated in Church activities for six months or more, or have suitable references from other churches in which they have participated.

Two-Adult Rule

Two or more adults should be present during any church activity involving children and youth to avoid having one adult alone with one child or youth. Examples of respective church activities include, but are not limited to, the following: Sunday school, vacation bible school, children's choirs, Power Pack, junior high youth group, high school youth group, Puppets ministry, and other church-sponsored events and outings. Exceptions to the two-adult rule may be required in certain situations (e.g., mentoring, counseling and transportation) and should be handled by the following:

1. Obtaining parental permission,
2. Using an "open door" policy (the door to the room where the adult is meeting with the child or youth is left open unless the door has a window), or
3. Notifying appropriate church staff in advance of such a meeting (unannounced visits by appropriate church staff may be made during the meeting).

Adequate Supervision

Church-sponsored activities and programs involving children and youth should always include adequate supervision. Generally, adequate supervision should be in the ratio of one adult for every ten children or youth. The supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children and youth are in the custody of their respective parent or legal guardian.

Overnight Rule

Two or more adults must always be involved in any church-sponsored overnight activities involving children and youth. All adult supervisors involved in these activities will be approved in advance by appropriate church staff. If both male and female children or youth are in attendance, the respective adult supervision must include, at least, both one adult male and female.

Prohibited Behaviors

For all staff and volunteers working with children and youth, specific behaviors that will not be tolerated include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Physically striking, hitting or spanking of a child or youth.
2. Touching, fondling or kissing a child or youth in an inappropriate or sexual manner.
3. Using verbally or emotionally abusive or sexually suggestive language.
4. Placing yourself in a situation where you are alone with a child or youth without parental permission.

5. Consuming alcohol or illegal drugs before, during or after any church-sponsored activity or program.
6. Smoking on the church premises or at any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.

Training and Education

This policy shall be provided directly to all staff and volunteers prior to their involvement in church-sponsored activities and programs involving children and youth. The policy will also be made available to all members of the Church. As deemed necessary, additional training will be provided to staff and volunteers, including information relating to child abuse and sexual harassment.

Reporting

If any staff, volunteer or member of the Church reasonably believes that any child or youth has been the subject of physical, mental or emotional abuse, it is their responsibility to report this information to the Pastor, the Director of Family & Youth Ministries, or a member of the Executive Committee. While protecting the confidentiality of all parties involved (to the extent allowed by law), the necessary information will be gathered and documented, and appropriate parties (e.g., respective parents, police, Department of Human Services, etc.) will be notified as deemed necessary.