

INFANTS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

Mission Statement

It is in the best interests of the church and its children and youth to adopt policies, procedures and screening tools to assist in protecting the physical, mental and emotional well being of the children and youth who participate in the church-sponsored activities at Faith Lutheran Church.

Definition of Child Abuse

The victim of child abuse is a person under the age of 18 who has suffered one or more of the categories of child abuse as defined in Iowa law (physical abuse, mental injury, sexual abuse, denial of critical care, child prostitution, presence of illegal drugs, manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance). The abuse is the result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child.

Volunteer Information Sheet

Potential volunteers must fill out the Faith Lutheran Church Volunteer Information Sheet prior to working with Infants, children or youth. It is a vital part of protecting the church from legal action if a case of an alleged wrongful act is filed against the church. The completed forms are confidential and will be kept on file in the business office. These forms are necessary to show the court(s) that the church has done a systematic screening of the volunteers prior to them being accepted for a ministry. If the screening is not completed and an alleged wrongful act is filed against a volunteer, the church could be liable for neglect in allowing a person who has allegations of child abuse to be given a leadership role of trust over children. By having all persons involved in children and youth programs fill out a Volunteer Information Sheet, we are working to protect our children, guarding the integrity of our leaders, and reducing the church's possible exposure to liability.

The Volunteer Information Sheet asks for three personal references. These references may be contacted by the business manager and asked to comment on their knowledge of the volunteer. A careful record should be kept on file of the person making the contacts, the date of the calls and a summary of the references' comments.

All hired and volunteer staff of Faith Lutheran Church may be asked to have a police check done at the expense of the church.

Definitions

Staff - Persons in the employ of Faith Lutheran Church. Employees may or may not be members of the church.

Volunteers - Persons 14 years of age or older who offer their gifts and time to Faith Lutheran Church and who receive no remuneration for serving.

Appropriate Authorities - Department of Human Services and/or Clive Police

Founded - child abuse allegations were verified, substantiated, or confirmed

Infant - six weeks through age two

Child - age three through sixth grade

Youth - entering seventh grade through the summer after twelfth grade

Red Cross Certified Youth – Those youth, 11 years and above, who have received babysitting training through the American Red Cross.

Infants, Children and Youth Safety Policy

1. Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse will not be allowed to volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program for infants, children or youth.
2. All volunteers working with infants, children, and/or youth must successfully:
 - a. Complete the confidential Screening Form AND
 - b. Complete the Notice To Volunteer Applicants form granting permission for a criminal records check, other public information, etc., AND
 - c. Be a member of Faith Lutheran Church for six months. (Beginning date to be the date they are received as a member of Faith Lutheran Church.)

The following individuals will be granted the right to work with the children of Faith:

- a. Persons holding a paid or volunteer position who have successfully completed a screening process equal to or greater in restriction and comprehension to Faith Lutheran Church.
- b. Employees of the ELCA (various synods, other churches, etc.)
- c. Teachers who are currently certified and employed within a school system, institution, or church setting.
- d. Counselors from church camps.
- e. Individuals who work with social service agencies.
- f. Any member of Faith who has been a member less than six months and does not meet the above criteria may be granted the right to work with the infants, children, and/or youth of Faith Lutheran Church if
 1. they transferred from an ELCA congregation where they were an active member for a minimum of six months AND
 2. where a criminal check was successfully completed within the last year.

3. The business manager will be responsible for making sure all volunteers meet the above requirements. Volunteer status will be reviewed every three years.
 4. Any individual who falls outside the parameters listed above will be considered on an individual basis with final approval being granted by the Executive Board.
3. Unsatisfactory Screening
- Faith Lutheran Church reserves the right at any time, for any reason, to not allow an applicant to work with infants, children and/or youth. These individuals may be offered opportunities to volunteer services in other areas of the church, and pastoral guidance and counseling may be offered to assist them in understanding the church's duty to provide the highest level of protection to its children and to the members of the church.
4. Two or more adults or two youth, who have been confirmed and have been certified through the American Red Cross Babysitting training program, will be present during any church activity that involves infants, children and/or youth. Exceptions may need to be made, for example, with the confirmation mentor program or a single adult may provide transportation when there is more than one youth/child with him/her.
- Such exceptions should be handled by either:
- a. Obtaining parental permission, or
 - b. After notifying church staff in advance, meeting in a public place.
5. Programs and activities that involve infant, children and/or youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all infant, children and/or youth are in the custody of their parent or legal guardian. For example, at least two volunteers should remain at the church following a youth activity until all youth have left the church.
6. Any reported inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult and an infant, child or youth will be investigated immediately using the procedure outlined.
7. Faith Lutheran Church reserves the right at any time to make changes, additions, and/or modifications to the Infants, Children and Youth Safety Policy.

Response to Allegations

It will be the policy of Faith Lutheran Church to deal with all allegations of improper conduct involving infants, children and youth with respect and dignity for all parties involved. Opportunities for spiritual and emotional support will be offered to all parties. Faith Lutheran Church will remain unbiased and supportive to all parties. Recognizing abuse allegations are devastating to both the accuser and the accused, the policies of

reporting will be carried out discretely, tactfully and without bias on the part of the reporting agent.

All reports or allegations of misconduct will be confidential, and reporting agents will maintain the confidentiality of all parties, to the extent allowed by law, with the exception of required reporting to parental, legal and social welfare authorities and the church's insurance and legal counsel.

Reporting

All allegations of incidents involving improper touching, physical abuse or sexual abuse of an infant, child or youth should be brought to the attention of the senior pastor or his/her designee.

A written report will be made within 24 hours of the alleged incident using the Incident Report Form. Unfounded reports will be destroyed after the investigation process is completed. The report should include the following information:

- Name of the infant, child or youth involved and the child's parent's name;
- Name of the worker/adult/other individual allegedly involved;
- Specific statement of the allegation of misconduct;
- Date, time and location of the alleged incident;
- Witnesses or other individuals with knowledge or information about the allegation. (*See Incident Report Form, available in the church office.*)

The following procedure will be used:

- The senior pastor or designated person will begin documenting in writing all efforts in handling the situation from the time it was first reported. This will continue throughout the process.
- The police will also be contacted if the child's immediate safety is at risk.
- The senior pastor or designated person will notify the church's attorney, insurance company or agent, and other synodical officials about the alleged incident.
- The senior pastor or designated person (if directed by our insurance company or attorney) will notify the infant's, child's or youth's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), in person and at home if possible.
- The suspected abuser will not be confronted until the safety of the child is secured.
- Care should be taken to avoid prejudging the situation, but all allegations should be taken seriously. Pastoral care will be extended to the victim and family at their home. The suspected abuser shall be afforded full due process in the handling of any complaint.
- Pastoral care will be available to the suspected abuser and family. The suspected abuser will be kept apprised of all developments. The suspected abuser will be supported and treated with dignity. He/she will be relieved of his/her responsibilities until the investigation is complete.

- The text of the prepared public statement (see *Spokesperson* section of this plan) will be used to answer questions from the press and the congregation, using care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
- If the senior pastor is the alleged abuser, the council president will take on the role of the senior pastor as identified above found in steps 1 through 6.

It is with this mission in mind that the following policies, procedures and screening tools will be used, beginning with new volunteers, new programs, new staff/employees and the start of existing programs on September 1, 2004.

Spokesperson

Only the senior pastor or the appointed attorney should speak to the media concerning a specific case. The following prepared statement will be used initially:

We are aware of the alleged incident of abuse involving a child of Faith Lutheran Church. The appropriate authorities have been contacted and are investigating the allegation. The church has a protection policy in place to screen all people working with infants, children and youth in our programming. This policy was implemented in 1998. For the protection of all involved, I cannot disclose any further information at this time. We are working with legal counsel preparing a more complete statement, which we will release as soon as it is finished. Thank you.

11/17/04