

# The SAFE HAVEN GUIDELINES



Including the Cherish Our Children Initiative and expanded appendix

Model Policies for the Protection  
of All People from Abuse



**Southwestern Minnesota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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Including the Cherish Our Children Initiative and expanded appendix

## Model Policies for the Protection of All People from Abuse

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Including the Cherish Our Children Initiative and expanded appendix

Model Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse

## Introduction

For the sake of the witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are intentional, open and clear about the integrity and standard of conduct to which each congregation, institution, organization or agency in ministry is called and to which its leaders are held accountable. This document is intended to provide guidelines for a “Safe Haven” for children and youth in congregational life.

Who are child abusers? In 75% of reported cases of sexual abuse, the offenders were known to the victims or their families. Research has shown that child abusers come from all ethnic and economic groups. Based upon the case studies that have been made, many who abuse children do so out of ignorance of proper disciplinary techniques, thereby inflicting emotional or physical abuse. Unlike physical abuse of a child, which may be accidental, child sexual abuse is a premeditated act. Child molesters defy the stereotypes we have created. It is not easy to identify these individuals.

Note: Children with handicaps often become target for all kinds of abuse. Their handicapping conditions may increase parental frustrations, resulting in neglect, emotional abuse, and physical abuse. Vulnerability to sexual abuse is increased due to physical or mental conditions perceived by the abuser to increase the child’s helplessness.

## Theological / Biblical Framework

Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord. Psalm 127:3 (CEV)

For members in our congregations, becoming a Safe Haven for children, youth and their families affirms our Baptism into the priesthood of believers.

Directly from the Affirmation of Baptism, Evangelical Lutheran Worship page 236:

“You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God’s faithful people, to hear the word of God and to share in the Lord’s supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?”

As the church, we bear witness to God’s grace in our lives that comes to us through Holy Baptism. Many of the children to whom we offer a Safe Haven have not been baptized. Many of their families and caregivers have not been baptized. Indeed, many of us who work to form Safe Havens for children and youth have not been

baptized. As we work together for the well-being of children, youth and their families, we ultimately invite people to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Scriptures for Reflection:

Mark 10:13-16 Jesus blesses the children

Mark 9:33-37 Who is the greatest?

Mark 4:35-5:1 Jesus stills a storm.

There are many other scriptures in both the Old and New Testament that give the responsibility for care of all children to the adults, parents, grandparents, God parents, etc. Every congregation is called to be a place of hope and healing for people of all ages in their community.

## Adopting the “Model” Guidelines as Policy

All agencies, institutions and organizations serving children and youth are encouraged to use these guidelines to develop policies for the prevention of child and youth abuse. It is intended and expected that local adaptations, changes, amplifications, improvements, expansions, or other types of revisions be made.

It is very important that the policy you adopt and implement complies with federal employment laws and with your state or local employment and privacy laws and other laws on, for example, checking criminal records. All laws are subject to change from time to time by action of state legislatures, Congress and state and federal courts. Therefore, you should develop and review your policy with assistance from persons knowledgeable in these laws.

Implementation of your policy should include regular training of adults in your congregation, organization or agency. It is the work of the local expression or institution to develop, implement, teach and hold accountable people who work with children and youth.

### Disclaimer

This document is intended as a suggested guideline, not a policy or manual. It does not cover every issue that you may want to consider in the development of such policies. Nor does it necessarily reflect the law of each state. You should consult with your own legal counsel and other professional advisors or insurance policies before adopting any policies for the prevention of child or youth abuse.

## Poverty, Children and Advocacy

Children who live in poverty tend to suffer from a wide range of health related problems, including hearing and vision problems. Many poor families are unable to afford notepaper, books or activities that promote learning. Special fees for art supplies, science labs or team sports may be out of reach. Poor children have far less access than others to computers. People living in poverty often do not have health insurance. Poverty can bring a quiet sense of shame for children and their families.

Racism, sexism, citizenship status, and classism are all factors that affect the economic health and well-being of families. The impact of poverty makes it almost impossible for children to grow up feeling safe, secure and

protected. When parents or care givers are consumed with survival issues, there is little time or energy left for tending to the emotional and spiritual needs of their children.

If our congregation is truly committed to helping the children, our focus needs to be broadened beyond our own families and the families in our congregations to encompass all children.

Effectively working towards a Safe Haven for children and youth living in poverty includes:

- a. Advocacy
- b. Discovery (learning)
- c. Accompaniment
- d. Community Organizing

Action Plan: What can my organization, agency, congregation or family do to respond to poverty with children and youth?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Look with honesty at your neighborhood. Talk directly with local schools (teachers, counselors & principles) needs facing the children in your area. Consider the gifts of your congregation. Where is the match?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider larger issues: abuse, hunger, safety, housing, education, gangs, drugs. Pick one; become informed as to how this issue is being expressed in your community, where services are and where the needs are. Can you help?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support parenting needs. Every community has this need. Every congregation can do this.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create mentoring programs in partnership with local schools. (Contact Big Brothers Big Sisters)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be involved in any recovery programs needed, including responding to natural disasters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Write letters to support change in public policy regarding needs, (Example: WIC, affordable housing)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consider a sister-parish relationship with a church experiencing poverty in or out of this country.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pray endlessly for the children others are not praying for. Be relentless. Involve others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact local congregations whose membership is less economically privileged. How can you be stronger as partners?

## Acknowledgements

This Model Guideline is the second edition of Safe Haven Guidelines written to increase our capacity to care for our children and youth.

Resources used to create this document include:

Safe Haven for Children, ELCA

The Boy Scouts in America

The Girl Scouts in America

The Episcopal Church – Safe Guarding God’s Children

Guidelines for a Safe Haven Congregation – First Edition and Second Edition

# Definitions

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and, as such, are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through guidelines, policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

## Children and Youth

A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years old.

A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

## Church Personnel

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following are included in the definition of Church Personnel when they are functioning in their respective roles for the church:

1. All Rostered leadership whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid personnel whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the synod, congregations, schools, camps or other agencies. For example: Pre-schools, After-school Programs, Theater Groups, Choirs, and Day Camps.
3. Those who contract their services to the church, its congregations, schools or other agencies.
4. Volunteers, including any persons who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards, committees, etc. For example: Adults serving as sponsors at youth gatherings, as drivers, at camp, in Sunday school classrooms, etc.

## Church Personnel fall into to one of two categories:

For the purposes of this guideline, the following are included in the definition of **Church Personnel Who Regularly Work With and Around Children or Youth:**

1. All clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth, other than church school teachers, in ministries, programs or activities more often than occasionally.
3. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more than occasionally.
4. Any paid personnel whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church, school or other related agency.

For the purposes of this guideline, the following are included in the definition of **Church Personnel Who Occasionally Work With and Around Children or Youth:**

1. Sunday School Teachers.
2. All paid or volunteer Church Personnel whose work regularly takes them throughout the facility or grounds or who have keys giving them access to the buildings on the grounds.
3. All persons who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities infrequently, generally no more than three times a year or for one program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month (i.e. assisting with preparation of the Christmas Pageant, teaching one "unit" for rotation Sunday School, serving as a substitute Confirmation mentor, etc.
4. All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle infrequently, generally no more than three times a year. (i.e. driving to camp, synod gatherings, service projects, etc.)
5. All persons who work or assist in the nursery four or fewer times a year, whether on an emergency basis or otherwise.
6. Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth once or twice a year.

## Types of Abuse

**Child Neglect:** Omission of the child's basic needs, physical, environmental, emotional and nutritional, that are necessary for a child's well being, or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

**Emotional Abuse:** Verbal or nonverbal violence toward a child that gives the child the message that the child is "not good" and never will be. Verbal abuse is a very common malady that attacks every human being at some point in their lives; some more than others. It can be a very devastating form of abuse when the person experiences the attacks frequently. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and/or material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical violence toward a child. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth. Often it is the transference of adult anger.

**Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation:** Any sexual contact with a child by an adult or an older youth. These acts may range from touching of the penis, vagina, buttocks, or breast/chest area to sexual intercourse. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.

**Drug & Alcohol Abuse:** There is an increase in the use of alcohol among junior and senior high school students. Children or youth that show up at church under the influence of alcohol or drugs, who bring these substances with them on church retreats, camp or other activities or those who are reported by peers to be intoxicated may need help to stop dangerous behavior.

**Economic Exploitation:** Economic exploitation is the deliberate use of a child or youth for money or power. This includes forcing a child to work, using someone against their will or using another person's labor without offering them adequate compensation.

**Bullying:** Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose. Usually, bullying happens over and over. Bullying also can happen on-line or electronically. Cyber bullying is when children or teens bully each other using the Internet, mobile phones or other cyber technology. Unfortunately, not everyone takes bullying seriously, including adults.



# Code of Conduct of Church Personnel

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This code of behavior is recommended to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister with them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider this Safe Haven Guidelines: Model Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse as part of developing a local policy.

- Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.
- Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socioeconomic status. Church Personnel should serve as a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They should avoid even the appearance of favoritism or impropriety.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with the congregation's local policies for general conduct with children and youth
- In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, church personnel agree to report their observations to the church leadership.
- All Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and understand there may be legal requirements to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.

# Screening and Selection

Any and all **Church Personnel who Regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth** should be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

1. A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the code of behavior. (Examples in Appendix)
2. Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the church. This check is to be updated every 5 years
3. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years. This check is to be updated every 5 years.
4. Individual interview with the applicant conducted by appropriate Church Personnel based on the purpose of the position. For example, the Director of Youth Ministries can interview those serving as sponsors, the Director of Music can interview the Children's Choir Director, the Pastoral Call Committee will interview the Pastor, the Pastor may do primary interviews for Church personnel, all based on the design of individual congregations or organizations.
5. 5. Reference checks of persons outside of the congregation or organization who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.
6. 6. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth.

Any and all Church Personnel **who Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth** should be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:

1. A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an acknowledgement for the release of information to conduct background checks and the code of behavior.
2. Individual interview with the applicant.
3. At least one Reference Check of a person or persons outside of the congregation who knows the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant interacts with children.
4. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be transporting children or youth.

All information gathered about an applicant should be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not it is appropriate for the applicant to work with children or youth. Church Personnel who work with or around children or youth should have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.

To the extent possible, no person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member when working with our around children or youth. For the purpose of this guideline, immediate family member is defined as spouse, partner, child, parent, sister, brother, similar in-law relationship, stepchild, step-parent, step-sibling, grandparent or co-habitant.

**New Members:** It is recommended that a person be a member of the congregation for a minimum of 6 months, and preferably 1 year before being invited to work with children and youth. Church Personnel who transfer between congregations or organizations and apply for or are asked to or who do undertake a position working with or around children or youth should undergo the same screening and selection process as noted above. This requirement may be met through a transfer of a copy of their personnel file to the new congregation, school, agency or program together with completion of a new application, individual interview, reference checks and copies of criminal background in the applicant's personnel file.

## Education and Training Requirements

Three hours of child abuse prevention education and training is recommended for all **Church Personnel who Regularly Work with or Around Children or Youth** before they start their work with children or youth or, if that is not possible, one hour of child abuse awareness training before they start their work and the rest of the training within three months of starting.

One hour of child abuse awareness education and training is recommended for all **Church Personnel who Occasionally Work With or Around children or Youth** before they start their work with children or youth.

Church Personnel who are responsible for screening, selection and supervision of others in programs for children and youth are recommended to complete an additional three hours of specialized education and training in screening, selection and monitoring every two years.

Check with your synod office or nearby organizations about local training events or with other congregations for recommendations of other training sources.

# Desirable and Undesirable Behaviors

Christian ministries are committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our church Personnel from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth.

## Appropriate and Inappropriate Affection

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth.

Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs. Preferred hugs are side-to-side hugs, one-arm hugs and a-frame hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- "High-Fives" and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for huddles with small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (for example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities.)

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry settings because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Any sexualized touching; Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth

- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection or physical contact
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans”
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth Private email or written communications with children or youth.
- Private scheduled meetings, outings or events just with child or youth

## Other Harmful Behavior

Inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. Some behavior may be inherently harmful to children or youth or are the types used by child molesters to groom children, youth and their parents, or may create the conditions where abuse can occur more easily. Furthermore, some behaviors and interactions are potentially harmful to children or youth in and of themselves.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Using, possessing, distributing or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while serving as sponsors, participating or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
2. Dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
3. Having sexual contact with a child or youth.
4. Youth or children left unsupervised or given an inappropriate amount of responsibility.
5. Adults sharing inappropriate jokes, stories or personal confessions with children or youth. This includes conversations about their own sexual activities, dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the internet with children or youth.
6. Dancing, games, skits, or jokes that make fun of a person’s gender, ethnicity, socio-economic reality or sexual orientation.
7. Possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.

8. Using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
9. Giving gifts or sending special or private emails or other communications to only certain children/youth. Outside of an appropriate mentoring relationship.
10. Holding children over the age of three on the lap.
11. Transporting children or youth alone.
12. Leaving one adult alone with one child or youth at any time. (Even when waiting for a parent who is running late to pick up the child or youth.)
13. Asking a youth to transport another youth or child. (Youth transporting youth should only be done with written parent permission.)
14. Adults meeting alone with a youth or child in a private location, including a Sunday School room, a home, hotel room or cabin.
15. Housing one adult with one child or youth at a camp, youth gathering or other overnight event.
16. Programs for infants and children under six years old should have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
17. Sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bags, tents, hotel rooms or other rooms with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the tent, hotel room or other room. It is preferred that even immediate family members have their own rooms. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleeping with multiple children or youth participating in one open space such as a church basement or camp lodge.
18. Dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth unless unavoidable.
19. Using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.
20. Using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management
21. Participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

# Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

The monitoring and supervision of programs and activities involving children or youth is important for safeguarding children and youth and involves several aspects. Structural guidelines or standards for the programs and activities for children and youth can provide a system for managing this supervision. These include such things as clarity on who approves new programs, how many adults need to be present and the like. In addition to setting structural guidelines the church leaders should make sure the guidelines are followed. Programs and activities have to be monitored and supervised to do that.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Every program for children and youth should have established ratios for adults and children. Compliance with these established ratios is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises. When both boys and girls are participating, male and female adult presence is preferred. (1:6 is recommended)
2. Existing programs (more than two years old) should be monitored for safety so that there is no assumption that care is taken to supervise programs as leadership is handed from one person or team to another over time.
3. Documentation of applications, screening requirements and training are kept up to date over time so that standards do not decrease.
4. Church Personnel should not be alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them. This includes hotel rooms, classrooms, offices, etc. One-to-one conversations with children or youth should be held in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
5. Church Personnel over the age of 21 should directly supervise Church Personnel under the age of 18 and be physically present during all activities. This includes day camps, youth gatherings, outdoor ministry events, field trips, etc. I have seen the 4 year age gap or something comparable as an alternative.
6. Church Personnel should develop new programs for children and youth within the vision, mission and values of the congregation or organization. Development of new activities should include plans to provide a Safe Haven for children or youth.
7. Each program will consider age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths.
8. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, church Personnel should remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
9. At least two unrelated (non-family members) Church Personnel are recommended to supervise activities.
10. Signed Permission to Participate forms (including Emergency contact information and consent for treatment) should be required for all activities. See the appendix for sample

# Action Plans

## Confidentiality

When a youth asks if you can keep a secret, you should tell them that you are not able to make that commitment. Assure them that you care about them and that you want to hear what they have to say. This includes abuse, suicide threats or information regarding crimes.

## Action plan when you suspect abuse:

1. Document your concerns.
2. Share concerns with supervisor, pastor or board chair.
3. Report confirmed abuse to legal authorities.
4. Continue to love and support the child or youth and seek to have appropriate follow up care by you or others in church.

## Action Plan for Known Sexual & Physical Abuse:

1. Give Affirmation & Hope
  - Praise the youth for having the courage to come forward.
  - Give hope through your willingness to listen, understand and care for them.
2. Give Assurance.
  - I love you and I will accept you no matter what.
  - God loves you no matter what.
  - You can be totally honest.
  - Please don't be afraid to tell the whole story.
  - Don't be afraid to admit your fears or present your perspective.
  - I promise to listen and to do everything I can to understand you and help you. (Only say this if you intend to follow through.)
3. Assist the child or youth in facing the Issue. If this is a sexual abuse issue, this is a conversation that needs to be heard by more than one Church Personnel, if possible. Encourage the child or youth to talk with another adult, preferably of the same gender. This is for your protection, as well as the child or youth, if questions of further sexual abuse arise.
4. It is important for the child or youth to understand they have been abused. Even if the child entered the relationship willingly, a sexual relationship between an adult and a child or youth is abusive.
5. Encourage the child or youth to get professional help. Assist them or have someone in the church assist them in connecting with a professional counselor. Work with a parent or parents to make a plan for recovery. If they are in immediate harm in their home, assist them in temporary shelter.
6. Acknowledge your responsibility to document the abuse and to share this information with the authorities.
7. Continue to be part of the healing of the child or youth as appropriate.



# Reporting Inappropriate Behavior, Policy Violations or Abuse

## Reporting Inappropriate Behavior or Policy Violations

1. When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the policy they should promptly report their observations.
2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:
  - a) A telephone call, email, or meeting with the immediate supervisor of that person,
  - b) A telephone call, email, or meeting with the pastor or other leader in authority,
  - c) A telephone call, email, or meeting with the church council president, organizational or agency board president,
  - d) A telephone call, meeting, or email to the synod bishop, or assistants to the bishop.
3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth need to be taken seriously.

## Reporting Abuse

1. Church Personnel may be legally required to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities.
2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, “in good faith” means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
3. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Church Personnel are to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Church Personnel directly to the pastor, organizational or council president so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.
4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve rostered Church Personnel should be reported to the Bishop or Assistants to the Bishop through a telephone call, or meeting.

# Guidelines for Counseling and Advising Children and Youth

Unless you are a trained, certified, professional counselor, you are not qualified to handle every situation that may arise as you serve children and youth in ministry. Issues that should be referred to your Pastor and/or to a trained professional after responsible reporting include:

- Child Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation
- Drug & Alcohol Abuse
- Economic Exploitation

## Suicide

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-24 year olds. Suicide occurs 3-4 times more often in boys than in girls. The most common method is by gun. Cluster suicide is becoming a growing problem. Using alcohol or drugs or experiencing depression increases the incidence of suicide. Suicide threats or casual remarks should always be taken seriously. Report this immediately! The person may sound casual about suicide, but only because suicide seems no worse than the other mental pain that they are already suffering.

Parents of youth, the pastor in the congregation should always be alerted about suicide threats. Suicide threats often require the involvement of mental health professionals.

# Social Media

"Social media are a collection of online platforms and tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media itself, facilitating conversations and interactions online between groups of people." -Doreen Moran, Digital and Social Marketing

## **"Friending:"**

Friending youth is a powerful ministry tool when used appropriately. When adults "friend" people under age 18 they should also request to "friend" their parents. Involving parents in this decision is important. An example of this request:

I would like to request to be your child's friend on facebook and/or twitter. I prefer "friending" both youth and their parents as part of my practice to promote transparency and appropriate adult – youth relationships. I encourage you to monitor all of your child's social media practice. I am happy to support you in navigating social media with your youth.

This practice promotes the safety of children and youth while providing good accountability with the adults who work with youth.

## **Posts:**

Social media, by its very definition is a public forum. There is no privacy in social media, even with the use of security settings. Think before you post. Would you say this in a room filled with congregation members? With youth?

Be aware of unintended consequences interpretation posts.

## **Groups or Pages:**

Consider communities that gather on facebook in the same way you would a community gathered in a room or a home. Youth Pages or Groups should be monitored at all times by Safe Haven Adults.

# The SAFE HAVEN GUIDELINES

Including the Cherish Our Children Initiative and expanded appendix

## Model Policies for the Protection of All People from Abuse

### Appendix

Congregations use standard forms to simplify managing their Safe Haven community. The forms in this appendix are samples of documents used in several congregations in the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod.

Please customize these pages to correspond with your own guidelines. If you need assistance developing other forms, contact the synod office. We will be happy to work with you.

All release forms should be reviewed by your congregation's attorney and insurance company.

Forms start on the next page.

# Student & Adult Participation Form

## Personal Information:

Participant's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Prefers: \_\_\_\_\_ Current grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ T-Shirt Size: YS YM YL AS AM AL AXL AXXL

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Student E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## In case of an emergency, contact this person if parents cannot be reached:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Medical Information

Does your child (or you) have any allergies or other medical conditions of which we should be aware?

☐ Yes ☐ No (If yes, please explain on back of form)

Does your child (or do you) have any diagnoses or history of behavioral or learning concerns about which we should be informed?

☐ Yes ☐ No (If yes, please explain on back)

Insurance Co. \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy # \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Insured: \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant's Covenant

In registering for this event, I realize that I may be participating in events which purposes may include: Christian learning, service and fun. I will refrain from using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs - no smoking allowed for people under age 18. I will not bring anything that could be considered dangerous (fireworks, knives, lighter, etc.). I will participate fully in the life of the event, honor the time commitments, and respect the rights of others. I understand that failure to abide by this covenant will result in consequences; one of which includes being sent home immediately at my own expense.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorization for Participation of Minors (Under 18)** I give permission for my child to participate in youth and family ministry activities sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_, including travel to and from locations, for the period of \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that my child's failure to abide by the covenant may result in his or her being sent home at my own expense. (Adult violators will be asked to leave.)

## Medical and Liability Release of a Minor or Self

I, the individual or parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name or your name), authorize a representative of \_\_\_\_\_ (congregation) to take such action as deemed necessary for the care, welfare and health of, myself/my child including the giving and consent of medical treatment. I hereby agree to indemnify and hold harmless from any expense of claims of any nature \_\_\_\_\_ and its representatives. I understand that I am responsible for any charges that may be incurred.

**Media Release:** I the individual or parent guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ give permission to use, publish, or disclose newsletters, brochures, periodicals, posters, websites, or other media related vehicles, any photographs, videos, audios, and any other material which I or my child may have appeared, spoken, written, or otherwise been represented. I understand that a copy of this release will be kept on file to indemnify \_\_\_\_\_ (congregation) against any of their use of the materials indicated.

Participant or Parent/Legal Guardian (if participant is under 18) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness (an adult not related to the above signer) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## First Aid Log

[illegible]

# Writing a Group Covenant

## Bible verses to look up and read together...

Matthew 22:34-40

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Luke 15:1-7

John 13:34-35

Matthew 18:15-17

1 Timothy 4:12

## **Question to answer for all participants...**

- What do these verses tell us about whom we are as people of God?
- What do these verses tell us about how we should behave on our trip?
- How will we solve conflicts?
- How will we hold each other accountable?

## Adult Commitment...

Adult sponsors should meet before the trip to work out the following:

- What are the expectations of the adults on this trip
- What are the different gifts each person offers the trip community?
- How will decisions be made?
- How will accountability happen?
- In case of a crisis or serious situation, who is the point person?
- How will communication with families and the congregation happen?
- Who will handle each step of the preparation process?
- Who is responsible for follow up?

## Sample Covenants

### #1 Covenanting with children:

Keep it simple! The following example is used with Camp Hope Ministry, Inc. and signed by all participants. The meaning of each form of respect is discussed.

Showing respect for:

J esus

O thers

Y ourself

### #2 Covenanting for retreats with Jr & Sr High Youth: Be specific!

#### Participant's Covenant:

#### **MUST BE SIGNED BY EVERY PERSON ATTENDING EVENT!**

In registering for this event, I am participating in an event which has as its purpose: Christian worship, fellowship and growth. I will refrain from using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs – no smoking is allowed (for youth), I will not bring anything that could be considered dangerous (fireworks, knives, lighters, etc.) I will participate fully in the event, honor time commitments and respect the rights of others. I understand that failure to abide by this covenant will result in consequences; one of which includes being sent home immediately at my own expense.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### #3 Covenanting for an extended experience: A discussion about the following topics should be discussed and addressed in the covenant.

**Respectful Behavior:** How will you live together as a community during this experience?

**Safety Issues:** Name unsafe behavior or items that are prohibited in this experience.

**Conflict Resolution:** How will you manage conflicts as a group?

**Consequences for breaking the covenant:** Agree in advance how violations to the covenant will be handled.

**Follow through:** Are there expectations for the group after the experience?

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### #4 Thou Shalt's for Youth Events

Thou shall refrain from using alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs—No smoking is allowed (for youth)

Thou shall NOT bring anything that could be considered dangerous (fireworks, knives, lighter, etc)

Thou shall participate FULLY in the event

Thou shall honor time commitments (Notice schedule on the back of name tag!)

Thou shall respect the rights of others and use appropriate language

Thou shall wear nametags around your neck where people can see it at all times

Thou shall NOT leave the hotel

Thou shall wear clothes at all times

Thou shall Not run down the halls screaming



Thou shall have an adult present if there is a person of the opposite sex in the room

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## #5 TEN Youth Group Commandments

10. People and property are to be treated with respect at all times!
9. Always remember whom you represent... God, Jesus, yourself, family & church, and always act accordingly!
8. No liquor, drugs, cigarettes or tobacco products, weapons, lighters or fireworks at any time. (Except when required by an adult sponsor for the event.)
7. No Swearing or "Trash" talk. This includes verbally "trashing" another individual.
6. Nobody is ever to leave the group or group activity without asking and receiving permission from an adult leader. Never go alone, always go in groups of three or more.
5. Everybody is expected to actively participate in all activities, worship, etc...
4. When asked to be somewhere or ready to go at a certain time, be there on time!
3. No "Cliques" or excluding any one or more individuals.
2. Always show respect for an individual's "personal space." (This includes appropriate hugs, no wrestling or lap sitting, appropriate sleeping arrangements on overnight activities and the like.)
1. What the Pastor, Youth & Family Minister, or Sponsors says - - goes!

I have read the above 10 Commandments and I understand that failure to abide by these rules will result in consequences of a phone call to my Parent(s)/Legal Guardian and being sent home immediately.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that my child can be sent home from camp or asked not to participate in upcoming events pending a personal meeting with the Youth Minister and a Pastor. I agree to cover all costs for their early return should this be required.

Parent or Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Scholarship Request

**Confidential**

Event \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Event \_\_\_\_\_

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES:

- ® Financial Assistance is available for all youth and family ministry events.
- ® All information on this form is completely confidential.
- ® The Scholarship Request Form should be submitted with the student's registration event form as soon as possible.
- ® The student's family is asked to contribute whatever amount of money they can.
- ® Financial Assistance, if approved, is available for the registration fee only.

Please describe the situation that causes your need at this time. Please be as detailed as possible. Indicate how much the family can provide and the scholarship needed.

Approved amount \_\_\_\_\_

Staff signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer Application

Confidential

Check desired ministry area: ☐ Children ☐ Junior high ☐ High School ☐ College-age

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
First MI Last

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City State Zip

Phone numbers \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Work Cell Email

Best times to reach me at home are \_\_\_\_\_ May we call you at work? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Employer's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Position at work \_\_\_\_\_ Years at current job \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date (please include year) \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License # \_\_\_\_\_ Church membership: ☐ Member ☐ Regular Attendee

How long have you attended this church? ☐ less than 1 year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ 5+ yrs

Emergency contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
name and relationship

Previous Addresses for the last 10 years:

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City State Zip

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City State Zip

High school	City	State	Grad year
College/tech school	City	State	Grad year
Degree and major		Minor	
Other education, training, and licenses			

Church (name, city, state, and zip)	Dates	Area of service	Contact person	Phone
1.				
2.				
3.				

1. What have you been doing to grow spiritually in the past year?

2. What would you do to maintain your spiritual growth as a volunteer?

3. Why are you interested in serving as a volunteer youth worker?

4. Explain your background in student ministry at this church or elsewhere

5. What special qualities or qualifications would you contribute as a volunteer youth worker?

Please provide three character references (other than family members) who can identify your strengths and weaknesses and describe your background.

1. Name Address Home / work phone Relationship

2. Name Address Home / work phone Relationship

3. Name Address Home / work phone Relationship

Please circle the words that best describe you, and cross out words that least describe you.

trustworthy dependable active compassionate reliable self-starter punctual flexible laid-back quick thinker  
spontaneous decisive teachable team player humorous thoughtful solitary leader cautious risk taker  
patient reflective honest organized creative disciplined faithful critical thinker proactive team player

What are your spiritual gifts? (Spiritual Gift Index is available at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org))

Please list any personal weaknesses, areas where you need to grow, or special concerns that could affect your ministry with students.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you had any prior injuries that might be aggravated by working in youth ministry? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you currently taking any medication prescribed by a doctor for physical or other conditions that would affect your ministry? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you have any medical conditions that might be hazardous to others? \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please attach another page and explain completely.

Have you, at any time, been involved in or accused, rightly or wrongly, of sexual abuse, maltreatment, or neglect?

☐ yes ☐ no

Have you ever been accused or convicted of possession / sales of controlled substances or of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

☐ yes ☐ no

Are you using illegal drugs?

☐ yes ☐ no

Have you been arrested or convicted for any criminal act more serious than a traffic violation?

☐ yes ☐ no

Have you ever been involved romantically or sexually with any student in the youth ministry, or had sexual relations with any minor after you became an adult?

☐ yes ☐ no

Have you ever been a victim of any form of child abuse?

☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, would you like to speak to a counselor or pastor?

☐ yes ☐ no

Have you ever gone through treatment for alcohol or drug abuse?

☐ yes ☐ no

Have you ever been asked to step away from ministry or work with students or children in any setting, paid or volunteer?

☐ yes ☐ no

Is there anything in your past or current life that might be a problem if we found out about it later?

☐ yes ☐ no

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, please attach another page and write a full explanation. These will be discussed confidentially with you at a future date.

I understand Safe Haven Guidelines and agree to be bound by them.

☐ yes ☐ no initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

I, the undersigned, give my authorization to \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Church) representatives— hereafter referred to as The Church—to verify the information on this form. The Church may contact my references and appropriate government agencies as deemed necessary in order to verify my suitability as a church youth ministry worker. I am willing to request and submit to The Church social security check, and background checks on myself from \_\_\_\_\_(Name of Background Screening Service) or a business that offers a similar service.

**The information contained in this application is correct 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 student ministry. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by The 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 whatever kind or nature that may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, because 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 Student and Family Ministry Handbook of The Church, and to refrain from conduct unbecoming to Christ in the performance of my services on behalf of The Church. If I violate these guidelines, I understand that my volunteer status may be terminated. By signing this application, I state that all of the information given about myself is true.

I further state that **I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF, AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN ACT.** This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Name (printed)

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Applicant's Signature

Date

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Witness Signature (an adult, other than a relative)

Date