

SHEPHERD OF THE BAY LUTHERAN CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THOSE WHO WORK WITH THEM

Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe, healthy environment for every young person to whom we minister. We believe that simple, yet effective steps can be taken to promote a safe environment for our children/youth and those who volunteer to work with them. Our policy demonstrates that Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church has taken a position against sexual misconduct and child abuse.

The following guidelines are intended to assist our church in:

1. Creating a safe place for all children while attending church activities.
2. Reducing the possibility of child abuse.
3. Protecting Shepherd of the Bay's volunteers and employed staff.

INFORMING VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYED STAFF

Volunteers and employed staff members are encouraged to be familiar with the following:

1. Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church Guidelines for Protection of Children, Youth, and Those Who Work with Them
2. Wisconsin child abuse and neglect law
3. How to identify children who have been abused/neglected.

Additional training will be provided as determined by the ministry directors, leaders, or pastor.

INITIATING THE GUIDELINES

All paid staff will make reasonable efforts to see that the following guidelines are followed for each youth/children's ministry program in their respective area. The policy will be available to all parents and members of the congregation.

RECRUITING AND SELECTING OF CHURCH WORKERS

1) Application Forms

- a) Ongoing volunteers and employed staff of children and youth ministry positions shall complete the Application for Volunteers and Employed Staff Form.
- b) It is the responsibility of the **council designee** to review applications for approval and complete a background check for ongoing volunteers and employed staff. Authorization for reference checks is given when the applicant signs the application for Volunteers and Employed Staff.
- c) Applicants with a criminal conviction or a guilty plea for a sexual offense will not be permitted to work with children, but will be directed to serve in other areas of the church.

2) Personal Interviews

Volunteers and employed staff may be interviewed by pastors, ministry directors, leaders, or committees.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1) Registration Information

- a) Parents/Guardians shall provide the ministry director with the following information at the time of registration: (Parents/Guardians shall keep this information current by providing written notice of changes to the ministry director. Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church shall make a reasonable effort to follow parental directives, but reserves the right to make decisions based on reasonable judgment, especially during times of emergency).
 - i) Emergency contact information name (not parents) and phone number along with parents'/guardians' work number(s).
 - ii) Medical information (such as medical problems, special needs, medications, allergies). This information may be shared with group leaders when appropriate.
 - iii) Medical release consenting to treatment and transporting in the event of an emergency.
 - iv) Transportation release authorizing vehicle transportation for off-campus activities.
 - v) The parent or person(s) authorized to take the child (nursery -grade 6).
- b) A reasonable effort will be made to obtain registration information for a guest attending on campus events.

2) Architectural Precaution

Classrooms used for the instruction of children should have windows on the doors and the windows should not be covered.

3) Drop Off and Pick Up Guidelines

- a) Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church shall make a reasonable effort to notify parents of class or event times. Parents should not drop their children off early as Shepherd of the Bay will not be able to provide supervision, nor insure the safety of the children.
- b) Parents will be asked to drop off and pick up younger children at their classroom. The Wonderful Wednesday Program will give instructions to parents for drop off and pick up at the beginning of each year depending on where activities take place.
- c) Children are not to leave the facility without the group leader's permission.
- d) Group leaders are advised not to leave the classroom or building until all students from their class have been picked up or other appropriate arrangements for classroom supervision have been made.

4) Classroom Supervision

- a) The following ratios are suggested minimum staffing goals:
 - i) Nursery: 1 adult for about 4-5 children
 - ii) Preschool: 1 adult for about 6-12 children
 - iii) Grade K-6: 1 adult for about 10-15 children
 - iv) Grade 7-8: 1 adult for about 18 children
 - v) Grade 9-12: 1 adult for about 18 children
- b) Volunteer and employed staff members are encouraged to be alert to strangers in the building. If there is a question about an unidentified individual, a ministry leader, director or staff member should be contacted.
- c) Staffing goals are subject to factors and considerations appropriate to the program and the individual situation.

5) Special Events and Off-campus Activities

- a) The following ratios are suggested minimum staffing guidelines:
 - i) Pre-school: 1 adult for about 4-5 children
 - ii) Grade K-6: 1 adult for about 6 children
 - iii) Grade 7-8: 1 adult for about 12 children
 - iv) Grade 9-12: 1 adult for about 12 children

- b) Written permission and registration information is required for participation in off campus activities. In extenuating circumstances, verbal permission with a third party witness may be accepted.
- c) Registration information and the medical release should accompany the group leader.
- d) Transporting Children:
 - i) Drivers need a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance with a minimum of suggested liability coverage in the state of Wisconsin (see Application for Volunteers and Employed Staff).
 - ii) Seat belts are to be used with the number of persons per car not exceeding the number of working seat belts.
 - iii) Children under the age of four are required to be properly restrained in a child safety restraint system approved by the Department of Transportation.
 - iv) Children who are at least four years old, but less than eight years old are required to be properly restrained in a child safety restraint system or safety belt, as appropriate, approved by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.
 - v) It is recommended that children under five feet tall not be seated in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with air bags.
 - vi) All drivers transporting children to events must be 21 years or older.

6) Display of Affection

Touch is essential in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. Adult leaders or employed staff should not be romantically involved with children in their care. Being in a one on one situation with a child is discouraged.

7) Constructive Discipline

Interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and reflect Christian values. Gentleness, respect, and understanding should guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training and correction. Physical punishment is inappropriate.

8) Substance Abuse

- a) Church sponsored events for children are drug, alcohol, and smoke free.
- b) Possession of these substances may result in any individual, adult or child, being removed from the event.
- c) Any individual under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be removed also.

9) Procedures if Children are Missing

- a) Assign another group leader, director or employed staff person to supervise the remaining children within the classroom or immediate area.
- b) Consider immediately notifying security (if available) at off-campus events.
- c) Search the immediate vicinity or interior building. This may include closets, bathrooms, storage rooms, and any other enclosed area.
- d) If an internal search is not successful, parents or the emergency contact and local police will be notified before an extensive search outside is undertaken.
- e) If outside areas need to be searched, additional individuals will be organized in an area search. Each person will be designated a specific area to cover.

10) Medication

- a) If any medication needs to be administered to a child, the parent/guardian will complete a medication consent form.
- b) Dispensing medications in the classroom is discouraged.

11) Medical Emergencies/Accidents

- a) Volunteers and employed staff may administer basic first aid measures. It is suggested that first aid kits are available in several locations throughout the building. Reasonable efforts will be made to notify a parent/guardian of an injury.

- b) If medical care is seen as necessary beyond first aid measures, reasonable efforts will be made to notify a parent/guardian for transportation to a local emergency room or medical clinic. If the situation is life threatening, emergency professionals, through 911, will be immediately contacted. Volunteer and employed staff members are encouraged not to transport the child.
- c) The accident report form should be filled out in the church office for situations requiring first aid or beyond.
- d) A first aid kit is recommended to be taken on off-campus activities.

12) Emergency Evacuation Plans

A) Fire

- i) Exit the building as diagramed on the floor plan which shall be posted in each classroom or activity area.
- ii) Shut the door of the classroom when everyone is out.
- iii) There should be one-way traffic in the hallways.
- iv) Take the class well away from the building. Meet in the east parking lot by the basketball hoop and make sure all of your students are with you. Group leaders are encouraged to have their class roster to take with them.
- v) Students should not go looking for parents, brothers, sisters or the family car.
- vi) Once it has been determined that the danger is past, the group leader will direct the children back into the building or other designated area.
- vii) If it is ascertained that there is a fire or definite danger, the children will be taken to the nearest available shelter. Parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their child(ren).
- viii) Group leaders are encouraged to review and practice the fire safety rules with their class.

B) Tornado/Severe Weather Alerts

- i) Tornado Watch: Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are possible.
- ii) Tornado Warning: Tornadoes detected, take shelter immediately.
 - a) Upon a tornado warning, the group leader will take students to areas that have no windows and are interior rooms (long hall between office and classrooms downstairs/women's small bathroom).
 - b) The group leader will account for all children.
 - c) The ministry directors, leaders or office staff as directed will make reasonable efforts to check the bathrooms and then take shelter.
 - d) The group leader should instruct children to crouch down on the floor, heads down, with hands over their heads.

C) Bomb threat

In the event of a bomb threat to the building, children will exit the building as for fire evacuation.

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH WORKERS

1) Reporting Obligations

- a) All volunteer and employed staff who work with children/youth shall immediately report any concerns related to suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect while in the course of their duties to a pastor, ministry director or leader and complete the Shepherd of the Bay Lutheran Church Suspicion of Abuse Report Form, which is submitted to the administrative pastor or to Shepherd of the Bay's council president. The administrative pastor or council president are the reporting agents to the Department of Human Services or in case of emergencies, to the local police or sheriff's department. All information will be confidential. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person nor the ministry director/leader, pastor or council president to substantiate any allegations or suspicions.

b) Cases can be discussed anonymously as to whether or not a report should be filed with the state by contacting the Department of Human Services.

c) Responding to the child/youth: when a child/youth first comes to you, be sure to take him/her seriously. Do not deny the problem. Stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he/she is not at fault and that he/she has a right to tell about the problem. Do not promise that you will not tell anyone. If the child is willing, have another adult listen to the conversation. Immediately write an account of the conversation, date it, and report it appropriately.

2. When questionable behavior by another volunteer or employed staff is observed, the ministry director, leader, or pastor shall be notified.

3. Other safety issues are to be brought to the attention of the ministry director, leader, pastors or appropriate committee.

4. It is important to remember that reporting of suspected abuse or questionable behavior by another staff person reflects caring and is not an act of disloyalty.