

**LIVING SPRINGS  
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION  
POLICY & PROCEDURES**

*Adopted December 12, 2004*

**EXPECTATIONS & AFFIRMATIVE  
DISCIPLINE POLICY**

**OPERATING CONCERNS  
PROCEDURES**

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## **VISION STATEMENT**

Secure in God's love, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we **celebrate** and **share** the peace of Christ, and **serve** according to God's will.

## **PURPOSE**

- In recognition of the spiritual and public trust given to this faith community, Living Springs Lutheran Church is committed to being a true sanctuary, both nurturing and protecting its members and visitors.
- Our congregation's stated purpose for establishing and providing detailed policies and procedures for the protection of our children is to help implement and maintain a safe environment that will enhance everyone's ability to participate freely in the life of the church.

## **STATEMENT OF COVENANT**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and an ELCA congregation

- We pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth.
- We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers;
- We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events;
- We will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods;
- We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law;
- And we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

## **KNOW THE FACTS...ABUSE IS A CRIME**

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE under South Carolina Code of Laws.

- “Child abuse or neglect” can be defined as physical or mental injury to a child, or acts or omissions which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to a child, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment.
- Child abuse or neglect” also includes committing or allowing to be committed against the child a sexual offense or engaging in acts or omissions that present a substantial risk that a sexual offense would be committed against the child; failure to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, supervision, or health care; child abandonment; and encouraging, condoning, or approving delinquent acts by the child.

## **REDUCE THE RISK...INSIST ON TRAINING**

- A mandatory training for all individuals working with children will be provided annually.
- If an individual misses the training, they will be required to review this presentation before working with children.
- Training will include a review of policies and procedures specific to Living Springs Lutheran Church and pertinent to the work in which the employee or volunteer will be involved, and instruction in the use and completion of various forms.
- The Pastor, in conjunction with Christian Education and Youth Ministry Teams, will maintain a record of who has received training.

## **REDUCE THE RISK...INSIST ON SCREENINGS**

- Permission to perform background checks will be received from all those who are working with children and all those who are employed by the church.
- Background checks will be required of all paid staff.
- Background checks will be performed randomly on an annual basis.
- Background checks will be run confidentially through the church office.
- An adult who has been convicted of sexual misconduct or abuse **may not** participate in any capacity in Living Springs Lutheran Church programs for children or youth. All other convictions will be referred to the mutual ministry committee where a decision will be made concerning the person's ministry with children.

## **REDUCE THE RISK...PROTECT THE CHILDREN**

More than 80% of sexual abuse cases occur in one-adult/one child situations.

- Minimize Opportunity.
- Eliminate or reduce one-adult/one-child situations.
- Choose group situations whenever possible.
- Choose an accountability partner.
- Be an accountability partner.

## **REDUCE THE RISK...INSIST ON POLICY**

### **TWO ADULT RULE**

- Two adult leaders must be present at each activity with minors. If there is an emergency at Sunday School or Vacation Bible School or some other planned event, and only one volunteer is available, every attempt will be made to recruit an adult or teen who has been trained. If a trained adult or teen is not available, another member of the church will be asked to come in.
- The church nursery shall always have at least two leaders.  
Exceptions are:
- Sunday School Classes or choir held in rooms with a window in the door.
- Youth group where the door is open and there are other adults present in the building at the same time.

### **FIVE YEAR OLDER RULE**

- Classroom, nursery, and youth group advisors/volunteers must be at least 5 years older than the oldest participant in the class or group.
- Exceptions are granted in cases related to care of special needs students.

### **CHURCH NURSERY POLICY**

- The nursery shall have a sign in and out procedure to prevent the possibility of an unauthorized person taking the child.
- Additional policies and procedures are maintained by the Church Nursery Coordinator, under the direction of the Pastor.
- Nursery attendants are required to attend annual training and adhere to these additional policies and procedures.

## **REDUCE THE RISK...INSIST ON POLICY (cont.)**

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL POLICY**

- A teacher handbook, with additional policies and procedures, is maintained by the Sunday School Team, under the direction of the Christian Education Ministry Team.
- Sunday School Teachers are required to attend an annual orientation and adhere to the policies and procedures set forth in the teacher handbook.
- A Congregational handbook is also available.

## **REDUCE THE RISK...MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITY**

### **DATING / SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

- No sexual behavior is permitted with Living Springs Lutheran Church minors.
- Other behaviors which are abusive, but do not involve physical contact, are also prohibited. Examples are sexual comments, the showing of sexual material and the exposure of sexual parts of the minor's body and/or adult's body.
- Adult leaders shall not date or be romantically involved with Living Springs Youth. If there is a current relationship, the adult cannot participate in Living Springs Lutheran events with a minor.

### **INAPPROPRIATE/UNHEALTHY**

- Activities that involve inappropriate physical or intimate contact are not suitable recreational activities.
- Unhealthy activities such as smoking, drinking of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, and improper language are not permitted.

## **PRIVACY**

- Leaders need to respect the privacy of minors in situations such as use of rest rooms, changing into swimming suits or taking showers on overnight outings, and intrude only insofar as health and safety require.
- Leaders also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

## **SEPARATE ACCOMODATIONS**

- A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight activity. If participants are both male and female, the adults should be both male and female. If these conditions can not be met, the event should be cancelled. When camping, no minor is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian.
- On retreats, if accommodations are not bunkhouse style, one adult will not share a room with one teen or one child (except their own children). There must be at least three people in a room (two adults/one child/youth or one adult/2 children/youth). The adult should not occupy the same bed as a minor, again with the exception of a parent or guardian. Males and females should sleep in separate rooms at events and have separate access to bathroom facilities.

## **ELIMINATE ONE to ONE SITUATIONS**

- During events, drivers should avoid dropping off or picking up minors without being accompanied by another person.
- Although, chaperones should remain at the entire event, or as long as the children they are accompanying are in attendance, keep this in mind...
  - At least two adults should be in attendance when the first child is dropped off and when the last child is picked up by the parent.
  - If you are alone as a youth or adult leader when the first child is dropped off, ask the parent to stay until more children or another adult or youth leader arrives.
  - If you as a youth or adult leader arrive at the event and find a child has been dropped off and is alone...seek out another person as soon as possible, and remain in a group. Avoid being left alone with the child.
- Avoid being in restrooms, kitchens, elevators, classrooms alone with one child.

## **EXPECTATIONS & AFFIRMATIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY**

- Discipline procedures are designed to be fair, consistent, effective, and loving. Our approach is to use positive reinforcement, warning, and time out from the group for behavior that endangers others, is disrespectful, or continually disrupts the program.
- Corporal punishment is never permitted, regardless of whether or not they are your own children, and regardless of whether or not the parent has given permission.
- Corporal punishment includes, but is not limited to, spanking, biting, slapping, shaking, unusually long time-outs, or depriving of food, water, or bathroom usage.

## **M O R E**

Our children and youth are expected to bring **MORE** to their programs:

- † **Model** Christian behavior. What would Jesus do?
- † **Obey** their teachers.
- † **Respect** everyone.
- † **Exercise** appropriate language.

## **D E P O S I T S**

Adult leaders are encouraged to make **DEPOSITS** into their student's Christian education.

- † **Demonstrate** Christian values.
- † **Empathize**.
- † **Prepare**.
- † **Orchestrate** age appropriate activities.
- † **Start** on time.
- † **Identify & support** individual's needs.
- † **Tell** children / youth your expectations.
- † **Sustain** child protection policies.

## **REMEMBER TO F I S H**

Relationships are the glue that hold our ministries together. Take the time to pursue relationships with **every youth and child** in the program.

Here are some conversation starters:

**F** means asking about their **family** and **friends**.

**I** is a reminder to discuss their **interests** and hobbies.

**S** stands for **school**---learn more about the classes and teachers they like.

**H** is for **history** and **hopes**---learn more about their past and their future dreams.

by Mike Harder, contributing author to *The Inside Out Youth Worker*

## **WHEN MISCONDUCT OCCURS**

When misconduct occurs, after all is done to prevent it, the following discipline progression and procedure will be used:

1. Remind the child of rules and expected behavior.
2. Redirect the child's activity. Remove the child from the misbehavior site, and involve the child in a new activity.
3. Remove the child from all activities for a time-out period so that the child can calm down, regain control, and think about the situation. Another adult may be asked to assist.
4. Remove the child from the room under the supervision of another adult until the child regains control and is ready to comply with the expected behavior and rules.
5. The adult leader should contact the parents and arrange for a consultation, if there is no success after step 4 and the child continues to display disruptive, disrespectful, or harmful behavior towards others.

The goal is to get the child to reflect on his/her behavior. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

## **OPERATING CONCERNS PROCEDURES**

Our aim is to bring all concerns about operating children and youth programs to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved. To achieve this, we comply with the following procedure:

- Step 1** Any parent who is uneasy about any aspect of the program or event should talk to the adult leader in charge at the time. Adult leaders may notify the ministry leader and/or Pastor.
- Step 2** Most complaints should be able to be resolved informally at Step 1. However, if this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent may move to putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the ministry leader and/or Pastor.
- Step 3** If at Step 2 an agreement cannot be reached, the parent may request a meeting with the ministry leader and Pastor. An agreed written record of the discussion is made. All of the parties present at the meeting will sign the record and receive a copy of it. This signed record signifies the procedure has concluded.

## **INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATION**

- Individual consultation between adults and minors must be done within the two adult rule. In situations that require personal conferences, mentoring, or counseling, this should be conducted in the church offices with at least one other approved leader present in the area (though not necessarily in the office).
- As a rule the counseling should be as public as possible, without sacrificing effectiveness. Seclusion should be avoided. If conducted in an office, it shall only be in an office with an unobstructed window in the door or wall. Unplanned individual contact on outings (such as for counseling purposes) must be done in view of another adult or minor.
- Planned contact outside the church building must occur only in public places and with the prior consent of the minor and parent or guardian. Examples would be a ride home, or a conversation over a coke between a youth and adult.

## **HEALTH AND CONSENT TO SEEK TREATMENT FORM**

- All participants in the Living Springs Lutheran Church Youth Groups and anyone participating in a field trip must have a medical release form on file with the Youth Ministry Team Chair.
- Keep confidential.
- A copy will be kept in the church office.
- These will be completed yearly unless changes need to be made.
- Leader must be in possession of all medical release forms, permission slips and emergency contact information while on field trips.

## **PERMISSION SLIP & ASSUMPTION RISK WAIVER & RELEASE**

- All participants in the Living Springs Youth Group will complete and anyone participating in off site activities must have a permission slip on file.
- These will be completed at least annually by parents or guardians and will be kept on file by the Youth Ministry Chair Person.
- A copy will be kept in the church office.
- Leader must be in possession of all medical release forms, permission slips and emergency contact information while on field trips.

## **INJURY OR ILLNESS**

In the event of an injury or illness follow these emergency procedures:

1. Leaders are not required to hold a valid First Aid/CPR cards; however, those leaders that do have valid First Aid/CPR may apply first aid skills.
  
2. If an injury occurs:
  - Determine if the injury is a medical emergency (i.e. severe bleeding, possible neck or spine injury, compound fracture, difficulty breathing, poison ingestion, etc.)
  - For medical emergencies: call 9-1-1.
  - Do not administer medication.
  - Do not move the patient.
  - Give health and consent to seek treatment form to medical professionals.
  - Contact the parent/guardian.
  - Complete an **accident report form** on that day. Be specific and provide details. Give a copy to the parent/guardian and staple the original to the child's permission slip/medical release forms.
  
3. Alert parent/guardian immediately if any of the following is present:
  - Fever
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Rash
  - Medical Emergency
  - Injury Requiring Medical Attention

## **AKALOO PARENTAL CONSENT FORMS**

- In an effort to ensure a positive and safe experience for children, Augsburg Fortress which maintains the akaloo.org web site, requires that congregations who use the Akaloo website obtain a written consent from a parent or guardian **before** registering a child / youth under age 18.
- More information about these forms can be found on the Akaloo website. [Akaloo.org Terms of Use](#)
- A copy of the signed consent will be kept in the church office.

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY DOCUMENTS**

All adults that minister to minors or serve alongside minors in the various ministries throughout Living Springs Lutheran Church should complete and return the following documentation:

- Child and Youth Protection Agreement
- Authorization and Request for Criminal Background Check

All youth that minister to minors or serve alongside minors in the various ministries throughout Living Springs Lutheran Church should complete and return the following documentation:

- Youth Caregivers Agreement

Documents will remain on file in the church office in a secure setting.

## **IF YOU WONDER ABOUT ABUSE**

- Educate yourself with the 7 Steps To Protecting Our Children.
- Look for signs of abuse (see supplement “Recognizing Child Abuse & Neglect).
- Don’t overreact. **BELIEVE** a child or young person if they talk - even hesitantly - with you about upsetting things which are happening to them. **NEVER** blame a child or show doubt about what they might say.
- Offer support. Find gentle ways to let child/youth know that you are someone they could talk to if there are things that are bothering them.
- Contact the Pastor and express your concerns in order to explore options.
- Be attentive to ways in which the child/youth may be trying to tell you about abuse (reluctant to attend various events, sudden disappearance from activities, or obsession by a child/youth upon whether a particular adult will be present at activities, etc).
- Know your legal responsibilities.

## **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING**

- Staff should report incident to the Pastor and/or directly to Richland County DSS.
- Volunteers should report incident to one of the Pastors. The Pastor will assist the volunteer in reporting to the proper authorities.
- The Pastor will report the incident to the church’s legal counsel as needed.

## **MANDATED REPORTING OF OFFENSES**

The law of the State of South Carolina provides that:

- Members of the clergy, are **required** to report to civil authorities if they receive information which gives them reason to believe that a child has been or may be neglected or abused.
- Church staff and volunteers that have reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect **may** report to civil authorities in accordance with the state law.
- Additional mandated reporting of offenses are listed in the policy and procedures handout.

## **7 STEPS TO CONFRONTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

Step 1. Learn the facts. Understand the risks.

Step 2. Minimize opportunity.

Step 3. Talk about it.

Step 4. Stay alert.

Step 5. Make a plan.

Step 6. Act on suspicions.

Step 7. Get involved.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

Adults - Complete, sign and date

1. Child & Youth Protection Agreement
2. Authorization and Request for Criminal Background Check.

Youth & Parents together review, sign and date

1. Youth Caregivers Agreement

Return to Pastor or to Training Leader

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Living Springs Lutheran Church Child & Youth Protection Policy & Procedures Adopted December 12, 2004
2. Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect
3. 7 Steps to Confronting Child Sexual Abuse
4. Health and Consent to Seek Treatment
5. Permission Slip and Assumption Risk, Waiver & Release
6. Accident Report Form
7. Child & Youth Protection Agreement
8. Authorization and Request for Criminal Background Check
9. Youth Caregivers Agreement