

Youth Protection Policy & Procedure

- For purposes of this policy, “infants” are defined as being under the age of 4; “children” are defined as being between the age of 4 and 18.

I. Volunteer & Employee Worker Selection

A. Screening

1. Risk Management of an occasional volunteer or paid staff worker:
 - a) Occasional volunteers and paid staff include individuals who volunteer or work with a group of children infrequently as youth helper or substitute.
 - b) Occasional volunteers and paid staff will qualify to work with children if they:
 - (1) They complete an Application Form and
 - (2) They meet the criteria set forth in the application
2. Risk Management for volunteers and paid sta workers of regular youth settings
 - a) Regular volunteers and staff include: Individuals who volunteer or are paid regularly.
 - b) Regular volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:
 - (1) They complete the application form and;
 - (2) They are a member for at least 1 year with references; or
 - (3) They are an active, participating non-member for at least 1 year with references; and
 - (4) They participate in a personal interview with the LifePoint elder board and are approved to work with youth
3. Risk Management for volunteers or paid staff for special events with higher probability of risk:
 - a) High Risk volunteers and staff include:
 - (1) Positions which involve working with infants or;
 - (2) Supervision of on campus or overnight activities; or
 - (3) One-on-one situations alone with individual children/youth; or
 - (4) Driving children or youth to campus activities
 - b) High risk volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:
 - (1) They complete an application; and
 - (2) They permit a criminal records check
 - (3) They indicate prior positive experience, skill, training, or work related to children and/or youth; and
 - (4) They have a positive personal interview the LifePoint elder board
4. Satisfactory completion of screening requires:
 - a) No known history or criminal record of or relating to child abuse or molestation or other findings of a criminal record involving injury to another; and
 - b) Positive references; and
 - c) Experience working with children or satisfactory demonstration of ability to learn and understand the position for which the individual applied

5. Unsatisfactory completion of screening and exclusion from service with youth or children includes:

- a) Prior history, conviction, or guilty plea for child abuse or molestation;
- b) Other findings of a criminal record;
- c) Negative personal reference or interview by LifePoint elder board

- Individuals who do not satisfactorily pass screening may be offered opportunities to volunteer their services in other areas of LifePoint church. Pastoral guidance and counseling should be offered to these individuals to assist them in understanding the house of worship's obligation to provide the highest level of protection to its children, youth, and its members.

II. Youth Supervision

A. Two Person Rule

1. Reasonable effort will be made to have two approved adult workers present, or nearby, with all infants, children, or youth during all church activities. A teenager that has completed the application process may qualify as one of the adults.
2. In the event there are not 2 adults available, one adult may provide supervision of the leadership team has approved of the situation.
3. Parental/guardian permission should be obtained any time a volunteer or paid staff member must be alone with a child or youth. If contact with a parent/guardian cannot be made, another adult should be notified.

B. Leaving Church Grounds & Transportation

1. No volunteer or staff member may take a child off church property without the permission of a parent or guardian. Reasonable effort will be made to have another child or adult present during the time of transportation.
 - a) All persons driving children or youth must be age 18 or older, have a valid driver's license and vehicle insurance, and be an approved volunteer.
 - b) The use of seatbelts in vehicles will be required at all times and all local and state traffic laws must be observed.
 - c) Written permission shall be obtained for all off-campus trips involving youth.

C. Overnight Rule

1. Only volunteers or paid staff members who have been authorized for high risk positions will be allowed to chaperone overnight activities.

D. Open Door/Window

1. Reasonable effort will be made to place infants, children, and youth in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching and learning activities.
 - a) If a door does not have a window, the door should remain left open.
 - b) Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

E. Nursery Identification

1. All infants will be signed into the nursery upon arrival.
2. A parent/guardian must be present before child is released.
3. Youth nursery attendants must have parental/guardian permission for supervising children.

F. Prohibited Behaviors

1. A volunteer and/or paid staff shall not place himself/herself in a situation where he or she is alone with a child absent proper parental/guardian authority.
2. A volunteer and/or paid staff shall not use profanity, vulgarities, emotionally abusive language, drugs, or alcohol. 3
3. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not strike, hit, spank, or otherwise physically abuse an infant, child, or youth.
4. A volunteer and/or [paid staff member shall not touch, fondle, or kiss an infant, child, or youth or physically or verbally engage in any inappropriate or sexual manner with an infant, child, or youth.

III. Incident Reporting

- A. Observed or reported child emotional, physical, or sexual abuse or neglect should be reported immediately to the Pastor, or the chairman of the elders in his absence.
 1. The Pastor will assist the individuals knowing how to proceed.
 2. Individuals who are mandatory reporters will report directly to the Cottonwood County Family Services Office then inform the Pastor and elder board that a report has been made.
 - a) A non-mandated reporter may choose to notify Cottonwood County Family Services directly.
 3. An incident report will be completed and presented to the Pastor and elder board to review.
 - a) Under no circumstances should the volunteer or paid staff member contact the family, question the child or the alleged abuser.

IV. Response to Allegations

- A. All allegations involving improper touching, physical abuse or sexual abuse of an infant, child, or youth during the course of any and all house of worship sponsored activities must be immediately brought to the attention of the Pastor or member of the elder board.
 1. All allegations will be taken seriously and church staff will take appropriate action in accordance with the laws of the State of Minnesota, insurance policy requirements, and based upon advice of legal counsel.
 2. If the perpetrator is within the reporting chain, that person shall be bypassed and the report made to another individual or individuals within the reporting chain.
- B. The Pastor or elder will immediately remove any person charged with improper sexual or physical abuse or conduct with an infant, child, or youth from contact with all persons below the age of 18. The period of contact restraint will continue until the investigation of the charge has been concluded, and the charge has been determined to be without merit. If the charge is determined to be sufficiently serious as to require reporting to governmental authorities, the period of contact restraint will be continued until the authorities have determined that the allegations are without merit.
- C. If an incident is reported, it is the responsibility of the senior pastor or other individual within the authority chain to see that proper notification is made to the following: parent/guardian, legal and social welfare authorities as may be mandated by state law, and insurance company (in accordance with the insurance contract.)
- D. The church staff will document, in writing, all efforts in the handling of any incident.
- E. The official spokesperson for the church in any of these matters will be the Pastor or his appointee. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media in an official capacity.
- F. The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in the allegations. LifePoint Church will minister to all involved as well as cooperate with authorities.

V. Education

- A. All volunteers or paid staff will receive an initial child abuse prevention education upon entry into the ministry at LifePoint Church as well as annual refresher education for all volunteers and paid staff working with infants, children, or youth.

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VI. Procedures for Dealing with a Registered Sex Offender

- Any person having been placed on a sex offender registry as the result of a sexual misconduct or molestation offense will be allowed to attend church services under the following conditions:
 1. The conditions of their parole allow them to do so;
 2. They agree to periodic meetings with the Pastor or member of the elder board for the purpose of imposing conditions and reviewing compliance with such;
 3. They are not allowed to use the downstairs public restroom unless accompanied by an usher or another assigned church member. If there is no assigned church member they must use the private upstairs bathroom.
 4. They are not allowed to ask to have keys in their possession or to know the door codes.
 5. It is understood they will never be hired as a LifePoint employee or work with the LifePoint infants, children or youth in any way.
 6. The registered sex offender is to be presented with a written copy of their restrictions and by their affixed signatures must agree to abide by these conditions. It is also understood that if they violate any of these conditions their attendance privileges may be revoked.