

ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

General Purpose Statement

St. Peter Lutheran Church and School seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following policies, our goal is to protect the children of **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and adult volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” and/or “youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “staff” and/or adult worker refers to any compensated employee. The term “adult volunteer” refers to persons 18 years old and over who work with children. “Leadership position” is defined as a teacher, coach, counselor or mentor (whether volunteer or paid) typically long term in nature as opposed to an assistant, aide, assistant coach, driver or chaperone who would be supervised at all times by a person in a leadership position and would typically be of short term nature.

Selection of Adult Volunteers

All adult volunteers who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a. Six Month Rule

No applicant will be considered for any leadership position involving contact with children until she/he has been with St. Peter Lutheran Church and School for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Applicable Administrative Staff in consultation with another administrative staff person can make an exception to this guideline.

b. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in advance of being selected. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous Church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. Upon completion of the application and review the individual will be notified of their approval status. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School**.

c. Background Check(s)

A national criminal background check is required for staff (regardless of position) and for the following categories of adult volunteers:

- Those who will be involved regularly and consistently in our Sunday School, Day and Preschool, Extended Care Center, Student Ministry, and other Children's Ministry;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children; and
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children

Before a background check is run, prospective adult volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he/she will not be allowed to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children? If warranted, a disqualifying determination will be made by the applicable Administrator over the program area (**i.e. Director of Student Ministries, Preschool Director, Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Pastors**) on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. The applicable Administrator may consult with other Administrative Staff as needed. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form, results, and any determination of disqualification will be kept strictly confidential and maintained on file at **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School**. Protecting the security and privacy of your personal information is important to **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School**. Access to personal data collected while carrying out the requirements of this policy, whether in paper or electronic form, is strictly controlled.

Our policy is that all adult volunteer criminal background checks shall expire after three years time. If an adult volunteer wishes to continue working with children and their background check is more than three years old, he/she must submit a new application. In the interim, each adult volunteer is responsible for keeping St. Peter Lutheran Church and School updated/apprised of any criminal conviction that may occur since their last background check during the three year period.

Those having intermittent one-on-one contact with children (such as, St. Peter Lutheran Church and School sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers) will be required to undergo a State of Michigan ICHAT background check yearly. Anyone transporting children shall have a valid driver's license and current proof of insurance on file in the church/school office.

d. **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

e. **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children their references may be checked. If possible, these references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School**.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers and/or volunteers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some classes may have only one adult worker in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult worker. Whenever possible, we do not allow a child or youth to be alone with one adult volunteer on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's social well-being, physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes but is not limited to the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing including verbal, visual and neglect exploitation.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. All mandated reporters (teachers, pastors, childcare workers, etc.) involved in the care of children at **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** who have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall immediately contact the Department of Social Services, giving an oral report and then one of the following people shall be notified: **Director of Student Ministries, Preschool Director, Principal, Assistant Principal and/or Pastors**. Within 72 hours after making the oral report, the person who called shall file a written report. All childcare workers will report to authorities as may be mandated by law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified by the **Senior Pastor or the President of the Congregation**.
2. The individual alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an

investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.

3. If there is reasonable cause to suspect a child has been abused, neglected, or sexually exploited civil authorities will be notified by the **Senior Pastor or the President of the Congregation**. **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** will comply with the state's mandatory reporting requirements under the Child Protection Law as the law then exists. **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified **by the Senior Pastor or the President of the Congregation** and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. **The Senior Pastor** will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. In case of the Senior Pastor's alleged involvement the **President of the Congregation** will be our spokesperson to the media. In either case, the advice of legal counsel shall be secured before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All professional staff and leadership of **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** shall refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room unless part of a security lockdown procedure.

Minors

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for helpers (paid or unpaid volunteer) who themselves are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to minors:

- Must be at least age 12.
- Must be approved by an administrative staff member and have written permission from a parent or guardian to be a helper.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure for Sunday School

For children below Third Grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," **the Coordinator of Sunday School, Preschool Director, Pastor for Congregational Growth and/or the Director of**

Youth Ministries will be contacted. One of these individuals will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School**. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our staff or adult volunteer workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

In general, it is the policy of **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care.

Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian at home.

Parents/Guardians are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted by parents/guardians of children. Parents/Guardians of such children should address their situation with **the applicable Administrative Staff member** to develop a plan of action.

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to review the Preschool Manual and the Parent-Student Day School Handbook for further direction.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of **St. Peter Lutheran Church and School** not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents/guardians have suggested or given permission for it. There shall be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with **Director of Student Ministries, Preschool Director, Principal and Assistant Principal and/or Pastors** if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Young 5's and preschool aged children should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group and whenever possible avoid taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should remain outside the stall door(s) and escort the children back to the

classroom. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For the protection of all, workers and volunteers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to an event, activity or class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

St. Peter Lutheran Church and School will provide training on this Child and Youth Safety Policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are required to attend mandatory courses.

SPLCS Personnel

All employees will be required to read the Child and Youth Safety Policy and will need to sign a waiver that they understand it and will adhere to the policy's content. This waiver will be kept in the employees' personal file.

Approved by Church Council on June 16, 2016