

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THOSE WHO WORK WITH THEM

PREFACE

Trinity 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.

The guidelines of the booklet 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 Trinity's volunteers and employed staff.

INITIATING THE GUIDELINES

(rev. 8/17/00)

Definition of Terms:

Pastors and ministry directors are employed staff of Trinity Lutheran Church as defined by the constitution of Trinity Lutheran Church.

Ministry leaders are defined as volunteers who chair ministry committees.

Committees are composed of Trinity Lutheran Church members and participants.

Group leaders are teachers, mentors, chaperones.

Children includes ages birth through 18 years.

Trinity Christian Preschool, Noah's Ark, is subject to Wisconsin licensing rules for group day care centers.

The ministry director will make reasonable efforts to see that the following guidelines are followed for each children's ministry program in their respective area.

RECRUITING AND SELECTING OF CHURCH WORKERS

- 1) Application Forms
 - a) Ongoing volunteers and employed staff of children and youth ministry positions shall complete the following forms:
 - i) Application for Volunteers and Employed Staff

- ii) Covenant for Children's and Youth Ministry
- b) It is the responsibility of the pastors and the ministry directors/leaders to review applications for approval, determine if a background check, criminal check, and/or personal interview is needed, or contact references. Authorization for reference checks is given when the applicant signs the application for Volunteers and Employed Staff.
- c) Some criteria for evaluating the need for doing a personal interview, reference check or background check are:
 - i) Length of local residency
 - ii) Current job status
 - iii) No previous home church or any affiliation
 - iv) Previous experience in working with children
 - v) Not known by any current member of Trinity
- 2) Personal Interviews

Volunteers and employed staff may be interviewed by pastors, ministry directors, leaders, or committees. Refer to Interview Guidelines For Volunteers and Employed Staff.
- 3) Reference Checks
 - a) Reference checks are the responsibility of the pastors, ministry directors/leaders.
 - b) References contacted are recorded on the Trinity Lutheran Church Reference Contact Form and kept with the application form.
- 4) Background Checks

A background check, as required by State of Wisconsin regulations, will be done on every employed staff member whose position involves working with children.
- 5) Other
 - a) Trinity Lutheran Church has taken a position against sexual misconduct and child abuse.
 - b) A volunteer with a criminal conviction or a guilty plea for a sexual offense, no matter how long ago it occurred, should not be permitted to work with children. They should be directed to serve in other areas of the church.
 - c) Adult leaders or employed staff should not date or be romantically involved with children in their care.
 - d) Church sponsored events for children are drug, alcohol and smoke free. Possession of, or in the presence of any of these substances may result in removal from the event.
 - e) Being in a one on one situation with a child is discouraged.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 1) Registration Information
 - a) Parents/Guardians shall provide the ministry director with the following information at the time of registration:
 - 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).
- Parents/guardians shall keep this information current by providing written notice of

changes to the ministry director. Trinity 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.

- b) A reasonable effort will be made to obtain registration information for a guest attending on campus events.

2) Architectural Precaution

It is recommended that classroom and office doors, with the exception of restrooms, eventually have windows which provide easy viewing by parents and directors. These should not be obstructed.

3) Drop Off and Pick Up Guidelines

- a) As part of the registration process for any preschool-grade 6 program, the parent/guardian shall identify with whom the child is to be dismissed or if they can leave independently.
 - b) If a child needs to be picked up at a different time or by someone not listed as an authorized pick-up person, parents need to call the church office or send a written note verifying the change.
 - c) If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up the child, the teacher, ministry director or leader shall make a reasonable effort to clarify the situation before the child is released after obtaining information such as the name, relationship to the child, and description of the individual. Verification of the information with a driver's license is also encouraged.
 - d) Trinity Lutheran Church shall make a reasonable effort to notify parents of class or event times. Parents should not drop their children off early as Trinity Lutheran Church will not be able to provide supervision, nor insure the safety of the children.
 - e) Parents will be asked to drop off and pick up preschool-grade 2 children at the classroom. Children in grades 3-6 are also encouraged to be dropped off and picked up at their classroom. Possible exceptions are those children who are riding their bikes, walking home, or have arrangements to meet at another designated place in the church as indicated on the pick-up information.
 - f) Children are not to leave the facility without the group leader's permission.
 - g) For activities during non-regular office hours, it is advised that the doors for drop off and pick-up remain unlocked only during arrival and departure and kept locked during the rest of the program.
 - h) 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) Restroom Guidelines
- a) Parents/guardians are responsible to inform the group leader if a child has a problem with bladder control, diarrhea, or any other medical problems.
 - b) Parents are encouraged to take their child(ren) to the restroom prior to class.
 - c) Group leaders are encouraged to designate which restrooms are to be utilized for each program or activity.
 - d) Volunteers under age 12 years are discouraged from helping children in the restrooms.
 - e) If a restroom time is needed for preschool-grade 2, the following procedure is recommended:
 - i) If only one child must use the restroom, the leaders options could be to take the whole class along or to ask for help from another group or ministry leader or director who may escort

the child to the restroom or supervise the rest of the class. Do not leave the classroom unsupervised.

- ii) Screen the restroom to make sure that everything is in order before the child enters.
- iii) If a child needs assistance in the restroom, leave the stall door open. Never be alone with the child in the stall with the door closed.
- iv) If a child does not need assistance, it is suggested that the leader remain at the outer door so that the bathroom can be monitored from the hallway.
- f) If a restroom time is needed for grade 3-12, use of a buddy system is encouraged with the group leader directing which restroom is to be used.

5) Classroom Supervision Guidelines

- a) The following ratios are suggested staffing guidelines:
 - 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) Child care that is provided for a non church sponsored event, should be registered in the church office.
- c) All volunteer and employed staff are encouraged to wear identification.
- d) Volunteer and employed staff 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.

6) Special Events and Off-campus Activities

- a) The following ratios are suggested staffing guidelines:
 - i) Grade K-6: 1 adult for about 6 children
 - ii) Grade 7-8: 1 adult for about 7 children
 - iii) Grade 9-12: 1 adult for about 7 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) Vehicle must be in good running condition with working seat belts.
 - iii) Seat belts are to be used with the number of persons per car not exceeding the number of working seat belts.
 - iv) Children under the age of four need to be in a state-approved convertible car seat or belt positioning booster seat.
 - 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) No person under the age of 18 may drive to a youth outing unless the parent has given written permission or verbally requests this, per discretion of the ministry leader.
 - vii) No person under age 18 may drive to a youth outing that is outside the Eau Claire area. Rental vehicles will be driven by a designated group leader(s).

7) Proper 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.

8) Constructive Discipline

- a) Interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and fragile life, 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.

b) Suggested procedures for constructive discipline:

- i) Whenever an inappropriate behavior is observed, the child will be positively redirected into other activities as a means of extinguishing the inappropriate behavior.
- ii) When the appropriate expectations are not met, it is suggested that the group leader use the following steps: (1) Gives a verbal warning; (2) Notifies ministry director and/or parents/ guardians; (3) Meets with parents or guardians, ministry director to work towards resolving the problem.

9) Missing Children

- 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 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.
- e) If the search is still unsuccessful, the local police will be notified for further assistance and the parents or emergency contact person will be contacted

10) Medication Guidelines

- 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 be 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, should be immediately contacted. Volunteer and employed staff are encouraged not to transport the child.
- c) The accident report form should be filled out in the church office for situations as noted in K.2.
- 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 and make sure all of your students are with you. Group leaders are encouraged to have available 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 across the street to a safe location. 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
 - Tornado Watch: Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are possible.
 - Tornado Warning: Tornadoes detected, take shelter immediately.
 - Siren: A steady wail of the siren means take cover.
- i) Upon a city tornado warning siren or other notification, the group leader will take students to areas that have no windows and are interior rooms or to the basement areas.
- ii) The group leader will account for all children.
- iii) The ministry directors, leaders or office staff as directed will make reasonable efforts to check the bathrooms and then take shelter.
- iv) 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.
- 13) Nursery
 - a) Drop Off and Pick Up Procedure
 - i) Parents/guardians are responsible for completing the nursery registration form.
 - ii) Parents/guardians should clearly label diaper bags with the child's name.
 - b) Parents/guardians are discouraged from bringing sick children to the nursery.
 - c) Diaper changing procedures for nursery attendants:
 - i) Children under age 12 years are discouraged from changing diapers.
 - ii) A child should never be left unattended on the changing table. Every effort shall be made to position the changing table to allow maximum visualization of the nursery area.
 - iii) Change the diaper using either diapers and wipes supplied by the nursery or those supplied by the parent.
 - iv) After the diaper change is completed, clean the changing table by spraying it with the mild bleach and water solution that is provided and wipe dry with a paper towel. (This disinfectant should be kept out of reach of children and clearly labeled.)
 - v) WASH HANDS with warm water and soap.
 - d) Nursery committee members or other designees, will make a reasonable effort to clean the toys on a regular basis. Small toys are run through the kitchen dishwasher; large toys are hand wiped with a mild nontoxic cleaning solution.
 - e) The carpet should be cleaned quarterly by Trinity's custodial staff.
 - f) Volunteers and employed staff should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently while working in the nursery especially after wiping children's noses, before dispensing snacks and after changing a diaper.
 - g) Every reasonable effort shall be made to remove broken toys or those that pose a choking hazard to younger children.

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH WORKERS

A. Reporting Obligations

1. 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 Trinity Lutheran Church Suspicion of Abuse Report Form, which is submitted to the

administrative pastor or to Trinity's council president. The administrative pastor or Trinity's council president are the reporting agents to the Eau Claire County Department of Human Services at 833-1977 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.

2. 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 at 831-5720 (M-F 8 A.M.-5 P.M.).

3. 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 as noted in A.1.

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

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

D. 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.

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

In the case of an actual allegation against a volunteer or employed staff member, the following guidelines are recommended:

1. Document all efforts at handling the incident
2. Report the incident immediately to the church attorney and with his/her guidance to the appropriate civil authorities, insurance company and denominational officials.
3. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation of the situation.
4. Notify parent/guardians.
5. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child is assured.
6. Take all allegations seriously. Avoid prejudging the situation, engaging in denial, minimization, or blame.
7. Treat the victim and the accused with dignity and support. Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
8. If the accused is a church worker, he/she should be temporarily relieved of their duties until the investigation is completed.
9. Develop for public use a clear position statement of our church regarding child sexual abuse that can be released if an allegation occurs. This should not discuss specifics of the case, but rather the guidelines and safeguards that Trinity Lutheran Church has taken to reduce the risk

of child abuse and provide a safe environment for our children.

10. The administrative pastor or other designee is the spokesperson for the church.

11. Have an attorney present while answering investigative questions with the police or social service agency.

TRAINING OF VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYED STAFF

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

1. Trinity 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 or neglected.

4. The process for reporting known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

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