

# **Our Saviour Lutheran Church Child and Youth Protection Policy**

## **Mission Statement**

Our Saviour Lutheran Church's (OSLC) purpose for establishing this Child and Youth Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth. Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct a ministry of the gospel that protects the physical, mental and emotional well-being of the children, youth, and adults working with them in the following ways:

- We will follow reasonable precautionary measures in the selection and recruitment of employees and volunteers who work with children.
- We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.
- We will provide a safe and clean environment.
- We will educate the congregation, especially those who work 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.
- We welcome adults to visit and observe classes or activities that their children are involved in.

In all our ministries with children, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of God through Jesus Christ so that each child may grow unhindered in his/her faith.

## **Scope**

This policy shall cover all events or activities involving children either away from or on church property if sanctioned by OSLC staff or its authorized representatives.

## **Glossary**

For the purposes of this document, several key terms are defined below.

Child abuse – physical, sexual, emotional or mental harm or neglect of a child.

Staff – paid professional employees of the church

Child – a person under 18 years of age

Youth – a child between 12 and 18 years of age

Adult – a person 18 years of age or older

Volunteer – a non-paid individual who has custody and control of children at an OSLC sanctioned event

Driver – a person who transports individuals to an OSLC sanctioned event or activity

## **Safety Policies and Procedures for Children and Youth Ministries**

### ***Two Adult Rule***

Two or more adults will supervise all activities involving children and youth. Adults will be members of or affiliated with OSLC for a minimum of six months prior to working with youth or children. The start of the six month period will be determined by OSLC professional staff.

Some exceptions may need to be made for activities such as pastoral counseling, confirmation mentoring, and providing transportation. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of a staff member and should be handled by appropriate means such as:

- obtaining parental permission
- using the open door policy
- notifying the appropriate staff person
- using one or more roving observers

The activity may be cancelled if appropriate safeguards are not possible.

A youth (middle or high school student) may help with children's activities and be the second person of a team, provided they are working with an adult over 21 years of age. No worker under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility for children without special approval by paid professional staff. A youth helper should not be left alone with an adult volunteer.

Staff persons with background clearance may, if necessary, supervise children or youth alone, but they are encouraged to use other safeguards where applicable, such as open door, rovers, or notify the other adults of the situation.

### ***Screening of Workers***

All volunteers who work with children will complete a screening process. This consists of a volunteer application form, reference checks, a criminal records check and a Department of Transportation (DOT) check. A designated screener will review the reports. Criminal records checks will be performed not more than once/year and not less than once every three years. Individuals who demonstrate proof of state licensure in a health or education field and are currently practicing in that field (i.e., have already passed a criminal records check) can waive the background check if the license was issued within the last 12 months of their volunteer application.

### ***CPR/ Heimlich Training***

OSLC will coordinate and encourage CPR/Heimlich training for all people working with children or youth on a regular basis. In special high-risk areas, such as extended trips, reasonable efforts will be made to have a person trained in CPR/Heimlich in attendance.

### ***Child Safety and Protection Policy and Procedure Orientation***

Each volunteer will be well acquainted with the safety policies, and acknowledge their agreement to the policies by signing the volunteer application and participation covenant statement.

### ***Safe Environments***

Reasonable efforts will be made to provide a safe physical environment for children and youth as they participate in the activities of the church. This will be done in part by:

- Windows in all classroom doors or open doors
- Yearly review of rooms to ensure safety and eliminate unsafe conditions.
- The use of age level appropriate equipment for each class.
- Meeting places are appropriate for the activity.

### ***Parent Information***

Parents will be given advance notice and full information regarding events in which their children may be participating. Release and Consent Forms must be filled out and signed at the beginning of each program year (September) for the child to participate in Confirmation or Senior High events. This form will cover the regular weekly program and special events related to the program. Participation in any overnight event will require a Release and Consent Form specific to the event.