

Child Protection Policy Guidelines

Trinity Lutheran Church-Grand Rapids, MI

Adopted September 13, 2010

1. In this policy “workers” are defined as 1) all employees; and 2) all volunteers who have direct contact with minors or special needs adults. “Minors” are defined as persons less than 18 years of age. “Adults” are defined as persons 18 years of age and over.
2. All adult workers must be screened and undergo a criminal background check prior to beginning work. The steps and checklist to be used in the screening process are labeled “Appendix A”.
To submit on line for background check go to <https://www.ministryopportunities.org/tlcgr>.
3. All adult workers must undergo a criminal background check annually.
4. A background check may be waived for a person if that person can provide proof of employment in a Michigan public school; or proof of employment with another employer which requires annual background checks.
5. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children/youth or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children will not be employed and shall not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors or special needs adults.
6. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need and will receive the love and acceptance of our church family.
7. All workers shall observe either the “two-person rule” or the “open door policy” at all times. The “two-person rule” requires that employees and volunteers and supervisors shall make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where an employed or volunteer worker is alone with children or youth without a partner. The “open door policy” requires the door be open at all times, or that there is easy visual access to the room through a window.
8. All workers should show only proper display of affection, defined as follows: Hugs should be one-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs; avoid or prevent full contact or body-to-body hugs. Lap-sitting is appropriate only for children age five and younger. Casual touch may be only on a person’s head, shoulders, arms or hands.
9. Bathroom policy:
 - a. Children in the Nursery through 1st grade classroom must have an adult worker accompany them to the bathroom.
 - b. Children in the 2nd through 4th grade should use the buddy system when using bathroom facilities.
 - c. Only an adult worker may provide bodily assistance in the bathroom if a child requests help. The stall door must be propped open when aid is requested.
 - d. If an adult worker is not available when assistance is needed, a parent or person designated by the parent must be summoned to provide that assistance.
10. Discipline: All workers should understand the developmental level of the minors or special needs persons under their supervision and have reasonable expectations about attention span, activity and comprehension levels, and set the rules accordingly. Positive reinforcement for good behavior is encouraged such as verbal praise, special privileges or small items such as

stickers. If a minor misbehaves he/she should be warned first, then isolated from the other children, within the classroom and in visual range of a worker. If a child becomes abusive or out of control the worker will take immediate steps to protect the safety of all, and immediately report such behavior to the director, who will remove the child from the classroom and notify the parent(s). Behavioral needs of special needs persons will be addressed individually with the director of the program involved, and with a parent or guardian of that person. Under no circumstances will corporal punishment or verbal abuse be used. No worker may inflict, threaten to inflict or cause to inflict unnecessary, unreasonable, irrational or inappropriate force upon a child. Whenever disciplinary action takes place, the worker should always let the child know that he/she is loved and that Jesus continues to love him/her.

11. All workers must undergo comprehensive training annually, covering the contents of this policy.
12. Our guidelines and procedures for reporting suspected incidents of abuse, or any behavior which seems abusive or inappropriate are labeled "Appendix B". Our guidelines and procedures for responding to reported incidents of abuse are labeled "Appendix C".

IMPLEMENTATION:

Anyone who oversees a program where workers will have direct contact with minors or with special needs persons is responsible for implementation of this policy.

Appendix A
SCREENING PROCESS
Trinity Lutheran Church - Child Protection Guidelines

**Checklist for Employees; and for Volunteers With
Minors or Special Needs Persons**

- Completed application for ministry.
- Been an active member of our church for at least six (6) months. (Newly hired employees may be excluded from this item)
- Have references checked (keep documentation).
- Have a personal interview conducted (keep documentation).
- Completed a criminal background check OR
- Submitted proof of current employment with a Michigan public school, or with another employer which requires annual criminal background checks.
To submit on line for background check go to <https://www.ministryopportunities.org/tlcgr>.
- Undergone initial training on the contents of this policy.
- Given copy of instructions for handling child abuse cases.

(Checked by)

(Date)

Note: This form to be posted in each worker's file.

Appendix B
REPORTING PROCEDURES
Trinity Lutheran Church - Child Protection Guidelines

The law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and, in organizations such as Trinity Lutheran Church, to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore all workers at Trinity Lutheran Church must adhere to the following procedures:

1. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or violation of the Child Protection Guidelines of Trinity Lutheran Church, the worker shall immediately notify a pastor on staff at the church, or the supervisor of the program or ministry in which they work. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or neglect, the worker will also immediately make a report to the local child protection service or law enforcement agency (telephone number: 1-800-942-4357).

* Physical signs of molestation may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

* Behavioral signs of molestation may include:

- nightmares
- anxiety when approaching the church building or nursery or preschool area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
- nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

* Verbal signs of molestation may include statements such as:

- "I don't like _____."
- "_____ does things to me when we're alone."
- "I don't like to be alone with _____."
- "_____ fooled around with me."

* *Adapted from Child Abuse: Governing Law and Legislation by I. Sloan (1983)*

2. Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.
3. All church workers will receive training once a year regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

Appendix C

RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Trinity Lutheran Church - Child Protection Guidelines

1. The official spokesperson for Trinity Lutheran Church shall be the Senior Pastor or a spokesperson designated by the Church Council. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
2. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protection Services agency of the county, the church's insurance carrier, and the bishop of the synod.
3. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
4. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protection Service or law enforcement authorities.
5. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
6. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained, until allegations are cleared by authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
7. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the Senior Pastor or by the official spokesperson, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.