St. Luke Union Child Protection Policy

Definitions

“Child” or “Children”: A person or persons age 18 years old or younger.

“Child Abuse”: An act that involves non-accidental physical injury; sexual touching, words or advances; or verbal battering that creates substantial emotional harm to a Child.

“Driver”: A driver for any church-sponsored event transporting Children shall be over 25 years of age with a valid driver's license.

“Non-Ordained Staff Member”: A person who is paid for his or her services by St. Luke Union Church, but is not ordained. This includes but is not limited to office, custodial, maintenance, and music staff members.

“Ordained Staff Member”: A pastor or associate pastor who is paid for his or her services by St. Luke Union Church.

“Staff Member”: This term is used to refer to both Non-Ordained Staff Member and Ordained Staff Member.

“Volunteer”: A person, either ordained or not ordained, who supervises, travels with, ministers to or works with a Child or Children of St. Luke Union Church, but who is not paid for that service. A Volunteer may receive reimbursement for expenses related to his or her service.

Conduct of Employees and Volunteers

Staff Members or Volunteers who interact with Children must be informed of their specific duties and responsibilities. They must understand proper use of authority to ensure that a safe environment is provided for those for whom they are responsible.

Child Abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for police reporting, disciplinary action or immediate termination of employment or volunteer leadership.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Employment or Volunteerism

Before beginning any assigned duties, all Staff Members and Volunteers must submit the attached Application and Disclosure form or a substantially similar version of such form.

Before beginning any assigned duties, all Staff Members and Volunteers will be interviewed by the appropriate person or persons responsible for the Children or Youth Ministry to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the staff or volunteer position sought.

Prior to employment or volunteering commencing with Children, the Church will conduct a criminal background check and a sex offender registry check through a qualified service. The Personnel

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Committee of St. Luke Union will be responsible for screening Staff Members and Volunteers at least every 3 years. At least every three years, all Ordained Staff Members will attend boundary workshops required by their Association and/or Presbytery.

Any exceptions to the provisions in this section must be approved by a majority vote of the St. Luke Union Vision and Ministry Council.

Without exception, known sex offenders shall not be permitted to serve, volunteer or participate in the Children or Youth Ministry activities or participate in child care services or activities.

**Additional Requirement Child and Youth Ministry**

In order to provide a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God’s love:

- All prospective Staff Members and Volunteers who regularly work with, care for, minister to, or transport Children will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and acknowledge their receipt of the policy in writing. Such acknowledgements will be maintained in the Church office.

- All adults are expected to present a mature model of Christian behavior for those being supervised. The use of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, ammunition or firearms is not permitted when Children are present.

The following expectations and regulations shall also apply to any Children’s programming.

- St. Luke Union expects to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for Children’s activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, no fewer than two (preferably unrelated) adults will be present with Children. Children age 13 or older may assist an unrelated adult in supervising other Children’s activities, but such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two (preferably unrelated) adults be present. These expectations and regulations apply to the nursery, fundraising activities and other events or activities at which Children are present.

- We will have an open door policy on the Church property. This means that all room doors will be kept open, at least partially, while Children are in the rooms. In the case of the nursery, the bottom half of the door will remain closed, but the top half will remain open.

- A list of screened Staff Members and Volunteers will be posted in the outer office area.

- The ratio of adults to Children for supervision of overnight and off-site activities will be one to six. If groups of Children include both males and females, there must be both male and female adult supervisors, proportionately by gender of the group.
• In situations of overnight housing, if adults are housed in the same room as youth, at least two (preferably unrelated) adults must be assigned to each room. When housing is in hotels or college dormitory rooms, Children and adults should be housed in separate rooms, if possible.

• No adult shall take a Child alone in a vehicle, unless the adult is that particular Child’s parent, legal guardian or immediate family member.

• Signed written consent of one custodial parent or guardian of a minor (including transportation consent if appropriate) will be required for all activities off the property or any overnight activity. *(The Learning Team is in the process of updating the current CE Enrollment and Consent Forms)*

• A current health form is required for all Children attending a Church sponsored event taking place away from parental supervision. Such forms should be maintained in the Church office in a secure location, and updated annually.

**Child Abuse**

Members of the general public may report suspected Child Abuse and neglect, if they choose. State law mandates that workers in certain professions, including but not limited to child care workers and clergy members, must make such reports if they have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect.

Any Staff Member or Volunteer who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that Child Abuse has occurred or may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Illinois Department of Family and Children’s Services and, if appropriate, to law enforcement officials. The Illinois Child abuse hotline number is 800.252.2873. The nationwide Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-25ABUSE.

**Procedures for Handling Complaints**

a) In all cases, a Staff Member or Volunteer against whom a Child Abuse complaint is made will be immediately suspended from the position(s) and the Church Council will direct that appropriate personnel conduct a prompt investigation.

b) If the alleged behavior took place in an off-site setting by a Staff Member or a Volunteer, the appropriate site supervisor (if not the accused) will determine how best to ensure the safety of all participants. If necessary, the site supervisor may make an immediate decision to suspend the Staff Member or Volunteer against whom a complaint has been made, or to remove the Staff Member or Volunteer from the location of the activities or the event.

c) Before any individual against whom a Child Abuse complaint has been made may return to his or her employment or Volunteer duties, the Church Council will direct a full investigation of the matter, with a written report provided to the Council. The report shall include a
recommendation for resolution and an assessment of the Staff Member or Volunteer’s fitness to return to their former position(s).

If the investigation finds that Child Abuse has occurred, the Church will take appropriate action, including but not limited to:

   a) Disciplinary action, such as an oral or written warning or reprimand. Such disciplinary action may include defined expectations for changed behavior; or
   b) Termination of from employment or dismissal from volunteer ministry.

General Conditions

The Church may initiate or proceed with a formal complaint process or investigation at any time, regardless of the time elapsed between the alleged Child Abuse incident and the complaint. The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Any person may bring forward a Child Abuse complaint at any time. Neither consent nor acquiescence by the Child will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. No person bringing forward a Child Abuse complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will be adversely affected in any terms and conditions of employment, or any volunteer service, and shall not be subject to retaliation for such complaint or assistance in an investigation.

Information obtained or produced during a Child Abuse investigation shall be confidential to the greatest extent permitted by law, and shall be maintained in the Church Office in a secure location.

Clergy

All Child Abuse allegations that call into question the fitness for ministry of any Ordained Minister will be promptly forwarded to the Association and Presbytery that has commissioned or licensed that Minister.