

NORTH SHORE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Fox Point, Wisconsin

Children's and/or Youth Ministries Safety Policy

A. PURPOSE

All Children's and/or Youth Ministries of North Shore Congregational Church must take place in an atmosphere of love, respect and security. All children involved in the Children's and/or Youth Ministries, their parents, and the staff members and volunteers in those programs should be confident that such an atmosphere is in place. These guidelines have been adopted to ensure an atmosphere of love, respect and security for all those who participate in Children's and/or Youth Ministries both at North Shore Congregational Church ("the Church") and in its sponsored activities elsewhere.

This Policy sets forth the requirements that will apply to all Children's and/or Youth Ministries. Everyone who teaches, helps or cares for children, or is otherwise involved in Children's and/or Youth Ministries of the church must agree to act within the rules and policies of the Policy. Individual Children's and/or Youth Ministries may impose additional requirements as appropriate. The Church Council will be responsible for the enforcement and administration of the Policy.

B. STAFFING GUIDELINES

Adults who want to volunteer in Children's and/or Youth Ministries may apply as a Primary Volunteer or a Secondary Volunteer.

1. Primary Volunteer - An adult (18 years of age or older) may be considered as a viable candidate for a Primary Volunteer (e.g., teacher, youth mentor) to work with children/youth only if s/he possesses all of the following characteristics:

- a. Has been a member or active participant of the church for at least six (6) months prior to applying
- b. Has submitted the appropriate written application with all questions answered accurately and completely
- c. Has no history of child abuse or sexual abuse that the church can reasonably determine from references and periodic good-faith background checks
- d. Has been interviewed by at least one staff member
- e. Has received the appropriate orientation/training required for the position

2. Secondary Volunteer - An adult (18 years of age and older) may be considered as a viable candidate for a Secondary Volunteer to occasionally assist in a classroom, or be a helper or driver for Children's and/or Youth Ministries events if s/he:

- a. Has been a member or active participant of the church for at least six (6) months prior to applying
- b. Has submitted the appropriate written application with all questions answered accurately and completely
- c. Has no history of child abuse or sexual abuse that the church can determine from a good faith background check

3. Teen helpers- In general, for a teenager to help in the nursery or Sunday school, he or she must be confirmed or be otherwise approved, in writing, by the Director of Child/Youth Ministries or Minister responsible for the program or ministry. Youth programs and ministries may impose additional requirements as appropriate. Parents of prospective teen helpers (ages 13 to 18) will be asked to provide consents and verifications of the information on the Application. Upon approval, teen helpers will receive necessary training before serving in child/youth ministries. Teen helpers must always work under the direct supervision of an adult staff member or volunteer.

4. Staff member – For the purposes of this Policy, the terms “staff member” and “staff worker” refer to a person who 1) is financially compensated by the Church, and 2) has been background checked by the Church. Such persons, like Primary Volunteers, shall be considered fully qualified to teach, lead, facilitate, or assist in any of the Church's children's or youth ministries.

C. CHILD SECURITY POLICIES

1. Enrollment – Enrollment forms necessary for Children's and/or Youth Ministries to provide information concerning the child(ren)'s age and other necessary personal information, such as parents/guardians names, address, telephone numbers and other child specific information (e.g., allergies or medications) must be on file with the Church office.

Enrollment forms for children participating in Children's and/or Youth Ministries must be completed, resubmitted and placed on file annually. These forms will be provided before the beginning of the Children's and/or Youth Ministries year or upon the entry of a child into any Children's and/or Youth Ministries.

Visitors to the Children's and/or Youth Ministries shall be provided with a visitor information card to collect relevant information from the visiting parent/guardian or other adult responsible for the visiting child. After two (2) visits to the Children's and/or Youth Ministries, enrollment forms shall be provided to visitors for formal enrollment in the Children's and/or Youth Ministries.

2. Crib and Crawler Policy - When utilizing the Crib and Crawler room for a child infant through three (3) years of age, the parent/guardian will:

- a. Fill out an initial enrollment form noting the names of any authorized adults who may pick up the child;
- b. Sign in the child on the sign-in/sign-out sheet with the child(ren)'s name, parent/guardian name, and any allergies or other special instructions; and
- c. Receive a pager with an individual ID number that will be noted on a child sign-in/sign-out sheet in conjunction with the other information on the child(ren).

The child(ren) will only be released from the Crib and Crawler room to a previously authorized adult along with the properly identified pager received when the child(ren) was signed in to the Crib and Crawler room.

For those children age three (3) years through second grade, a roster of all children attending the Children's and/or Youth Ministries will be prepared during each session by the staff members and/or volunteers running Children's and/or Youth Ministries.

3. Diaper Changing\Bathroom Use - The Church has specially designated areas for diaper changing for children in the Crib and Crawler room. These areas are open to the classroom and must be used by volunteers for children infant through 3 years old in their care. For those children over 3 years old, diapers must be changed by a parent only.

All children in second grade level and below must be accompanied to the bathroom by a volunteer or staff member. When a child requires assistance to use the bathroom, the bathroom stall door and bathroom exterior door must remain open at all times when the staff member or volunteer is providing assistance.

4. Two Adult Policy - Whenever possible, at least two unrelated adult staff members or volunteers should be in the classroom when children are present. Doors should be fully open whenever one of the staff members or volunteers in the classroom leaves the room temporarily and before and after classes.

5. Short Staff Policy – Staff members and volunteers who are unable to serve on a particular day must notify the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries responsible for the Children's and/or Youth Ministries in advance of the absence when at all possible.

If a staff member or volunteer is unexpectedly absent for a class or program, the staff member or volunteer who is present must promptly notify a Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries, who will attempt to help monitor the class with frequent unannounced visits. The doors to the classrooms must remain fully open at all times. The Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries will

strive to ensure that each Children's and/or Youth Ministries is directed by two adult staff members or volunteers.

6. Monitoring of Children's and/or Youth Ministries - Church staff members responsible for Children's and/or Youth Ministries will endeavor to make periodic unannounced visits to the nursery and church school classrooms, or other ministry settings.

7. Health Considerations - A parent enrollment form shall be on file for each registered child/youth that will include emergency contact information and parent instructions/preferences for treatment of an ill or injured child/youth. Each classroom will have posted a reference for the location of a fully stocked first aid kit.

8. Safety Considerations - Each classroom will have posted an emergency preparedness plan to include fire response and instructions for severe weather. Also posted will be an emergency evacuation plan showing routes to the nearest exits.

D. STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

1. Guidelines for Physical Contact

a. Any physical contact between a volunteer or staff worker and a child and/or youth that would provide or is intended to provide any form of sexual gratification is strictly prohibited. Limited physical contact such as a pat on the back, or on the head, or a handshake or "high five" are permissible. Hugs are permissible within the sight of others. The volunteer and staff workers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon the request of the child and/or youth.

b. Volunteers and employees shall not abuse children and/or youth including but not limited to:

- (i) Physical abuse - e.g. strike, spank, shake, slap
- (ii) Verbal/mental abuse - e.g. humiliate, degrade, threaten
- (iii) Sexual Abuse of any kind, including inappropriate touching and exposure

c. Guidelines for healthy discipline:

(i) No form of punishment that involves physical pain or discomfort may be used. Children and/or youth may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive children and/or youth may be removed from the group to another part of the room.

(ii) Children and/or youth who are disruptive should be taken to another side of the room, or if necessary into the hallway (leaving the door fully open and within sight of other people). The volunteer and staff workers should explain to the child and/or youth that a particular behavior is unacceptable.

(iii) If the disruptive behavior persists the parents should be asked to come and sit with the child and/or youth the following week and for as

long as necessary until the child and/or youth can demonstrate he/she can control themselves. If the behavior continues, the child's and/or youth's parents may be asked to remove the child and/or youth from the classroom or other ministry setting.

(iv) We are committed to working with children and/or youth to find out what they need in order to fully participate, but not to the detriment of other children and/or youth.

2. Off-Site/Overnight Policy For Church Sponsored Events - A Church sponsored event is an event that has been approved by a board, a staff member, and/or a ministry team of the Church. In addition to the other applicable requirements of the Policy, all Church sponsored events off-site and/or overnight during which parents of each child will not be present must satisfy the following requirements:

(i) It will require the presence of at least two unrelated volunteers or staff workers, both of which have been screened and approved for service in Children's and/or Youth Ministries following the requirements in Section B.

(ii) Written parental or guardian permission and a medical release form must be obtained for each participant for overnight or off-site events.

(iii) Parents will be notified of the event, the address and telephone number of the place to which the children will be going (if possible), and the anticipated departure and return times.

(iv) Male and female children will be separated into different rooms for sleeping arrangements.

(v) Church staff members planning overnight trips or overnight programs will be especially diligent in selecting volunteers, maintaining the two adult policy to the extent possible, and maintaining appropriate adult supervision to the number of children/youth involved.

3. Special Guidelines for Youth Ministries (6th -12th Grade) - It is the desire of the Church's youth ministries to provide opportunities where approved volunteer and staff workers serve alongside families with teens to promote progress in each youth's faith journey. Volunteer and staff workers in the Church's youth ministry must follow all the requirements established by this Policy, including the following guidelines specifically applicable to the youth ministry:

a. General Guidelines

(i) One-on-one contact. One-on-one contact with youth must only be in public settings and with the knowledge of the parent/guardian or approved staff member.

(ii) Driving. When a volunteer or staff worker is driving with youth, he or she should avoid being alone with them without the parent's or guardian's knowledge and approval. Whenever there is a possibility that a volunteer or staff worker will be transporting children and/or youth without a second unrelated adult present at all times, the Director of Youth Ministries must receive permission from a parent or guardian of each

youth and must make specific arrangements for the transportation. The Director of Youth Ministries must let the parents know when he or she and the child will be leaving, how they will be traveling, when they expect to arrive at their destination, and when they will return. Three or more individuals should be in the vehicle whenever possible. Additionally, the driver must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance, in accordance with State Law. No one under the age of 21 shall drive any Church sponsored transportation.

(iii) Dating. At no time shall the Director of Youth Ministries, volunteers, or assistants working with youth pursue a dating relationship with a youth. Volunteer and staff workers should always be sensitive to youths with "crushes."

4. Emergency Situations - In the event of a medical, disciplinary, or any other situation that would require a child and/or youth to leave the classroom or other ministry setting, the child and/or youth will be accompanied to the appropriate destination e.g. the restroom, church office, etc. Attempts will be made to promptly notify the parent.

5. Reporting Procedure - Any violations of this Policy should be reported to the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries. Additionally, any volunteer or staff worker that has reason to be concerned about the safety or welfare of a child must bring his or her concerns to the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries. The Senior Pastor and Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries shall review any incidents or violations of this Policy. Violations of this Policy shall be evaluated to determine if the volunteer and staff workers should be removed from continued service in children's ministry.

6. Response Procedures - Wisconsin State law requires the reporting of any suspected child abuse to the branch of Child Protective Services in the county in which the child resides or to the police department. This reporting is required whether the abuse occurred during sponsored activities, or it occurred completely separate from any Church involvement. For example, if a child and/or youth communicates that he/she is being abused by a parent or other individual at home, volunteers and staff members are required by law to report the incident to the proper authorities. Upon discovery of any concern of any alleged or suspected child abuse, the following guidelines shall be followed:

a. Take appropriate steps to attend to the safety of the child and/or youth.

b. The parents of any children involved shall be notified immediately of an event that occurred at the church or at a church-sponsored Children's and/or Youth Ministries.

- c. Persons accused or suspected of child abuse or serious inappropriate behavior shall be suspended, with pay, from employment or removed from Children's and/or Youth Ministries while the incident is being investigated.
- d. Any investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse shall be referred to the appropriate civil authorities. Staff members or volunteers shall report any suspected incidents of abuse to the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries in person or anonymously. Church officials shall not attempt to investigate alleged or suspected child abuse on their own.
- e. The Moderator or in the Moderator's absence, the Moderator-elect shall designate a spokesperson to deal with questions directed to the Church from the media and congregation concerning an alleged incident of child abuse.
- f. All efforts at handling the incident should be documented. An Incident Report Form shall be completed and placed in a confidential file in the Church office. A single file shall be established and maintained in the Church office documenting all communications and steps taken to respond to allegations of abuse.
- g. Information about alleged or suspected incidents and the individuals involved shall be kept confidential. Information may only be shared with persons who either have been authorized or are required by law to receive such information.
- h. Commission of child abuse, inappropriate conduct towards children and/or youth and inappropriate relationships between adults and children or youth are grounds for dismissal from employment or removal from Children's and/or Youth Ministries.
- i. In instances where the Church Leadership is unsure as to the appropriate action to be taken in the event that a suspected child abuse incident occurs which is covered by this Policy, specialized legal counsel shall be consulted for further guidance. A list of approved legal counsel to contact for such guidance shall be prepared, maintained and, from time to time, reviewed by the Moderator, subject to approval by the Church Council. The Church Leadership may choose from among the counsel named on such list or such other competent and experienced legal counsel that they may at the time deem more appropriate taking into consideration all of the facts and circumstances of the suspected incident.
- j. In the event that a suspected child abuse incident occurs which is covered by this Policy, Church Leadership shall promptly notify the Church's insurance carrier as and in the manner required by the applicable insurance contract.

7. Approval Process - This Policy shall be reviewed and approved by the Church Council.

8. Periodic Policy Review - This Policy shall be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier if the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries determines a need for revision or update. Revisions to the Policy require review and approval by the Church Council at least 30 days prior to implementation.

(Current as of August 2007)