

Cross of Grace Lutheran Church
Safe Sanctuaries Policy
(adopted by Cross of Grace Church Council on October 18, 2016)

PURPOSE: To provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for the children and vulnerable adults of our faith family.

GOAL/SCOPE OF POLICY: To protect children and vulnerable adults from all types of abuse and inappropriate conduct, including, but not limited to, inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature. This policy prohibits sexual abuse, child molestation, physical abuse, and any type of inappropriate sexual or physical behavior by employees or volunteers of the church. The policy is also intended to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations, and to protect good faith reporters of alleged violations from retaliation for making an allegation in good faith.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT: Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, Cross of Grace Lutheran Church pledges to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that reasonably assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults as well as all those who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We will take reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events for children, youth and vulnerable adults; we will educate all of our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding our policy, required safety measures, and operational procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

DEFINITIONS

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as “any sexual activity with a child or vulnerable adult, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child.” Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children or vulnerable adults in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

EMPLOYEE: Anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children students, or vulnerable adults.

MINOR: Any individual under the age of 18 years.

PARTNER IN MISSION: An individual of any age who has made a commitment to participate in the ministry of Cross of Grace Lutheran Church; most often signified by participation in and completion of the Crossroads Class.

VOLUNTEER: Anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors. Examples include, but are not limited to: nursery; childcare, preschool, grade school, middle school, high school, and college workers; teachers; chaperones; and youth activity leaders.

VULNERABLE ADULT: Any person over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities.

STATEMENT OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The policy and procedures set forth below applies to all individuals who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity for contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities whether the individual is clergy, paid staff, or volunteer. This policy will address four (4) areas critical to the protection of the children, our employees and our church: selection process, protection procedures, reporting procedures, and responses to allegations.

I. SELECTION PROCESS

Required Process and Documents for New and Current Employees

- Job description
- Completion of an application form with checks of a minimum of 3 references, including former employers
- Completion of a background check consent form
- Clearance on all checks prior to work with minors and vulnerable adults
- Completion of annual safe sanctuary training
- Background check renewals every 3 years
- For employees, mandatory reporting of any arrest or conviction within 1 business day of the arrest or conviction; and for volunteers, any arrest or conviction that falls within the areas covered by the criminal background check procedures below

Required Process and Documents for Regular, Occasional, and Last-Minute Volunteers

- Completion of an application form with checks of a minimum of 2 references
- Completion of a background check consent form
- Completion of annual safe sanctuary training
- Clearance on all checks prior to work with minors and vulnerable adults

All records, forms and reports will become a part of an employee's personnel file. All volunteers' records, forms and reports will be kept on file at Cross of Grace, and, along with employee personnel records, will be kept confidential to the fullest extent allowed by law.

BACKGROUND CHECKS:

A background check must be performed for all Partners in Mission who work with, teach, counsel or chaperone children or vulnerable adults at any church, conference, or synod function. All adults without background checks may serve in a non-contact role under supervision of those approved. The name of each Partner in Mission with a clear background check will be placed on church letterhead, signed by a Pastor, and sent to the Synod office to be kept on confidential file. Criminal records checks will be limited to criminal activity involving the following: (1) any type of sexual offense (including, but not limited to, child molestation); (2) any pornographic or obscene material; (3) a minor; (4) any type of physical violence; (5) child abuse and (6) any other offense that might jeopardize the safety of a minor or a vulnerable adult.

BACKGROUND CHECK RENEWAL IS EVERY THREE YEARS with Safe Sanctuary training annually and immediate reporting of arrests and convictions as described in Required Process and Documents above.

THREE MONTH SERVICE REQUIREMENT:

In addition to the above requirements, a volunteer must be a Partner in Mission, or regular attendee, for at least three (3) months prior to working with children or vulnerable adults. A volunteer who does not meet these requirements may serve only upon approval of the Congregation Council. Other opportunities for volunteer service are available that do not involve direct contact with children or vulnerable adults.

SAFE SANCTUARY TRAINING must be performed annually and includes acknowledgement of, agreement to, and review of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and related law.

In addition to the above requirements, a minor who is an employee or volunteer must also submit a separate certification from his or her parent or guardian that the parent or guardian “knows no reason why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors.” Minors are NEVER permitted to supervise children without constant adult supervision.

II. PROTECTION PROCEDURES

TWO ADULT RULE: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of children except in emergency situations and where not reasonably feasible. Particular care will be taken to assure that a non-related adult is never alone with a child on a one-on-one basis. When the arrangements as described above cannot be guaranteed, parents may sign a waiver indicating their understanding and agreement to permit participation.

ALL PERSONS MUST BE AT LEAST FIVE YEARS OLDER than the age group they lead or supervise.

VIEW WINDOWS/OPEN DOORS:

Minors and vulnerable adults will be placed in rooms with view windows (in doors or walls) or open doors for all teaching/learning activities. A “floater” or hall monitor may also be used to make frequent room and restroom checks.

OFF-SITE / OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES – (following all Safe Sanctuary policies and)

- Parent/guardian must sign a participation waiver indicated their knowledge of and agreement to the following: start/stop times and location of event, program content, and lodging information.
- Staff/volunteer/bus/car driver must receive from parent/guardian: all contact information, parent/guardian permission/liability form signed with health/emergency information included.

TRANSPORTATION:

- Driver must have license and insurance on file with church.
- Each parent must sign a permission/liability/emergency information form.
- Everyone must wear seat belts when the vehicle provides seat belts.
- No one under 85 pounds should sit in the front seat.
- If a charter bus is rented, a coach company that conducts driver background checks will be selected whenever possible.
- A minor will never be allowed to drive from the church to an off-site location.

CONSENT FORMS will be required for a one-year period and must be renewed annually for continued participation in programs.

III. REPORTING PROCEDURE

Indiana state law requires reporting of child abuse in faith-based ministry settings. In keeping with our strong Christian beliefs that children should not be abused and neglected, Cross of Grace Lutheran Church will comply with the Indiana State law by reporting suspected abuse/neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

PROCEDURE:

Allegations of suspected abuse/neglect must be reported to directly to the Indiana Department of Child Services (1-800-800-5556).

IV. RESPONSE PROCEDURES

1. A quick, compassionate, and unified response to any alleged incident of child abuse is expected.
2. All allegations will be taken seriously, with grace shown to ALL parties.
3. The Pastor will yield to the Bishop and church personnel are not to undertake an investigation of the incident. However, in all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's activity, all those present should be at the service of official investigation agencies.
4. Cross of Grace staff will not minimize allegations or blame any individuals involved in the allegations. The church will minister to all involved and cooperate with authorities.

Cross of Grace will keep a Christian perspective on its portrayal of the incident to the community and will allow legal procedures fulfill their role of deciding the truth of allegations. This policy is intended as a showing of respect to all parties and as a community of faith, we vow to maintain respect and appropriate privacy for both accused and accusers.

Cross of Grace Lutheran Church
Safe Sanctuaries Participation Covenant

I have received a copy, read, understand, and will comply with Cross of Grace Lutheran Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

Employee / Volunteer Name (please print): _____

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date: _____