

ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

CHILDREN/YOUTH SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PREAMBLE

Churches should be the safest place in the world for children. Jesus expressed his love for children and the dire judgment upon anyone who would harm a child (Matthew 18:5-6). With pro-active abuse prevention policies, we seek to provide safe boundaries for all who are involved in ministry; help volunteers know how to handle situations; help parents feel comfortable; and help children feel loved and safe.

POLICY

1. All paid staff of St. Paul Lutheran Church will complete training through Protect My Ministry and submit permission for a background check.
2. All volunteers of St. Paul Lutheran Church who wish to work with children and youth will complete training through Protect My Ministry and submit permission for a background check.
3. All volunteers under age 18 will complete training and fill out the Children and Youth Ministry Application and return it to the appropriate Department Head of the Ministry.
4. All volunteers of St. Paul Lutheran Church who wish to work with children and youth must have been involved at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Trenton for a minimum of six months prior to filling the desired ministry position.
5. All volunteers of St. Paul Lutheran Church who wish to work with children and youth have been involved at St. Paul less than one year, in addition to above training and background check, must also fill out a Children and Youth Ministry Application and provide references. They must also be available for an interview by department head.
6. No applicant or volunteer ever convicted of a sexual related crime is eligible for service in a position with direct relation to children.
7. Any applicant or volunteer who is a survivor of child abuse in the past must meet with the Department Head prior to service in a position with direct relation to children in order to determine their readiness to serve.

Department Heads:

Nursery	Lynda Wiltse
Age 3 – Grade 5	Don Busse
Grade 6 – Grade 12	Mandi Ressler

8. Training and background checks will expire after 3 years. Ministry volunteers will then be asked to recertify and submit permission for a new background check.

PROCEDURES

1. Two adult rule – there should be a minimum of two adults in any setting or activity regarding children and youth. In cases where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child (i.e., counseling, visitation), all workers should obtain the consent of the child’s parent or guardian prior to being alone with the child. If consent is not possible, there should be another adult present and/or aware of counseling.
2. Before anyone begins working with children and/or youth, they will have completed training and a background check.
3. All volunteers will be provided a name badge which should be worn while working.
4. An adult worker should be present with teenage volunteer workers.
5. Children through the second grade are only to be released to properly identified and authorized individuals and appropriate sign-out procedures must be followed.
6. Physical contact with children should be minimal and only in the presence of other adults. Acceptable forms of physical contact include hugs from the sides, high fives, or pats on upper back. With smaller children, holding a hand is appropriate in the context of keeping contact with the child to prevent an unsafe action.
7. Inappropriate physical contact includes: rough-housing, butt slapping, or touching. Physical discipline or corporal punishment is also never appropriate. Volunteers should also be on the lookout for any cases where a child seems to be the recipient of gifts with an unexplained source or any other similar ‘grooming’ type behaviors by an adult or other youth member.
8. When children/youth use the restrooms at St. Paul, the worker should first check the restroom area before the child enters. The worker should not enter the restroom area with the child but wait outside for the child. A friend should accompany child to restroom if a worker is not available.
9. Youth workers should first receive permission from the youth’s parent to communicate via the youth’s cell phone or social media accounts. Communication via cell phone and social media should only pertain to St. Paul youth activities.
10. No group outings will take place except those pre-approved by the Department Head. For such trips, each student must have a signed permission slip and emergency form from the parent/guardian.
11. Any volunteer is responsible to address suspicious behavior or any behavior that may be contrary to church policy and to report such occurrences to the department head. This should remain confidential and only the official St. Paul spokesperson should speak on behalf of the church.