

CHILD, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULT SAFETY POLICY	
Policy Number	COU-06
Replaces Previous Policy	Section _____
Approval Date and Approving Body	07.18.2022; Church Council; effective date 01.01.2023¹
Next Review Date	07.2025
Original Policy Approval Date	
Related to Which Area of Church Business?	All programs involving children, youth and vulnerable adults
Responsible/Reporting Committee	Council
Alignment with ILC Purpose and Guiding Principles:	<i>Principle or None Apply</i>

Purpose: To provide a means of protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults from experiencing abuse, sexual misconduct, neglect, or injury while participating or engaging in an ILC program, event, gathering or ministry.

Background: Although ILC has a general statement regarding child safety in its _____ policy, it is important to have more detailed guidance regarding how to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults while participating in in an ILC ministry, event, worship service, gathering, or program. Adopting such a detailed policy will assist everyone working with children, youth and vulnerable adults as to how to act to better protect those with whom they work, how to better protect ILC resources, and how to better avoid any allegations of harm to children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.

Policy Statement: To minimize the possibility of harm to children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults while participating in ILC sponsored activities, ILC and its staff, volunteers, committees, representatives, and friends will take all reasonable precautions to protect such individuals from abuse, sexual misconduct, neglect, or injury.

¹ On or before January 1, 2023, detailed training regarding this policy will be provided to all ILC staff, volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults, members of the Church Council and all members of committees that deal with children, youth and vulnerable adults. In addition, written materials and an information session on the policy will be offered to all members and friends of ILC.

Procedures/Responsibilities:

DEFINITIONS

Minor—Any person between the ages of 0 and 18. A minor may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Child or children—Any minor from birth through fifth grade.

Youth—Any minor from sixth through 12th grade. A youth may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Vulnerable adult—Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. This may include individuals who are mentally or physically disabled and the elderly.

Volunteer—A person performing services or donating time or effort without compensation who is authorized to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Employee—A paid staff member of the ministry.

Worker—A volunteer or employee authorized to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return an initial Immanuel Lutheran Church "Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application."
2. The ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The ministry leader also will store all application materials—the application form, background checks, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.
3. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry leader, or designee, will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application. The ministry leader also will conduct a criminal background check through a reputable security company.
4. After the ministry leader, or designee, contacts references and performs a background check, he or she will conduct an interview with the candidate.
5. When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The same procedures required for volunteers also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered.
2. When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

WAITING PERIOD

All volunteer candidates for any ministry position with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must be a member of or regularly involved in Immanuel Lutheran Church for six months or more before they will be considered for such a ministry position.

SUPERVISION

1. **TWO ADULT RULE:** At least two screened adults must be present at every function or program involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. This includes each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. One or more of these adults must be 21 years of age or older. For large groups, the number of adult supervisors must be increased in accordance with state/teacher ratio requirements.
2. **RULE OF THREE:** In limited circumstances when the Two Adult Rule cannot be implemented, at least three individuals must be present, with at least one being a screened adult employee or volunteer. The Two Adult Rule should be followed at all times for activities or events involving children under the age of five.
3. While adult workers should avoid being alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, some limited exceptions may be permitted for spiritual counsel/mentoring of a youth. Any one-on-one interaction must take place in a location where the adult worker and the youth are both visible to others. Any planned one-on-one meetings must be approved by a ministry leader, and the adult worker must obtain prior written approval from parents/guardians. The duration and frequency of approved one-on-one meetings are to be limited to no more than three occasions for no more than 30 minutes at a time.
4. Adult employees and volunteers should avoid traveling in a vehicle one-on-one with a minor. If it is necessary, develop a communication strategy to notify parents/guardians or supervisors when leaving for and arriving at an event.
5. Identify no-go zones. To reduce or eliminate areas that are difficult to properly supervise, unused rooms, closets, and outdoor structures are to be kept locked with limited key access.
6. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or embracing others, etc.

BATHROOM PROCEDURES

1. For children age 6 or older, at least one approved adult should take children to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children. If assistance is required, the presence of a second adult escort is also recommended.
2. Children age 5 or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female. Leave the bathroom door ajar with a second screened worker nearby for additional accountability.
3. Never touch the private areas of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

1. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.
2. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.

DISCIPLINE

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual.
2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the ministry leader or to a parent or guardian.

INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
3. Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
4. Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
5. Ministry coordinators and supervisors who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.
6. Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the

time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person.

7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

RECORDKEEPING

1. All ministry functions involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults should maintain an attendance list for every function. Record the date of the function, along with the names of all participants, ministry coordinators, and supervisors.
2. Ministry workers should prepare a written Immanuel Lutheran Church "Notice of Injury" report whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function. Promptly forward the incident report to the ministry coordinator or supervisor.

SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND MANDATORY REPORTING

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers subject to mandatory reporting guidelines are expected to fully comply and report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or signs of neglect to local authorities.
2. Volunteers and employees who become aware of or have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform their activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader, unless the activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader is the suspected perpetrator. The volunteer or employee may be required to complete an Immanuel Lutheran Church "Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report" form.
3. Activity coordinators and supervisors who become aware of or have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform the ministry leader unless the ministry leader is the suspected perpetrator. If the volunteer or employee did not complete an Immanuel Lutheran Church "Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report" form, the activity coordinator or supervisor should then complete the form.
4. Ministry leaders who become aware of possible abuse or sexual misconduct involving a participant must ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or sexual misconduct has occurred. If the parent or guardian is the suspected perpetrator, the ministry leader will defer to local authorities on notifying the parent or guardian.
5. If there is any question as to whether or not a report should be made to the authorities and ministry leaders are considering not making a report, the ministry leader will ensure that an attorney is immediately contacted to provide a written opinion as to whether the organization should report the

suspected abuse or neglect to authorities. The written opinion should be obtained within 24 hours after the ministry leader first becomes aware of the situation. The attorney's advice should be acted upon immediately, including reporting the incident to the authorities. An attorney should be contacted immediately if the ministry leader or activity monitor becomes aware of possible abuse or neglect of a participant by a parent or guardian and is unsure whether to make a report to the authorities.

6. Ministry leaders must promptly notify our ministry's insurance carrier (general or professional liability insurance) upon notice of abuse or sexual misconduct. They also will notify the Office of the Bishop of the Northwestern Intermountain Synod, ELCA, to whom we also report such allegations.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry coordinator or supervisor when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
2. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

1. This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated first through civil authorities, then by ministry leaders with the assistance of legal counsel. The ministry will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
4. This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, we also will consult with legal counsel.

DEALING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT, NEWS MEDIA

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers of this organization will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation.

2. The leadership of this ministry will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.
3. One individual—a member of the leadership team, an employee, or our attorney—will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Each year, we will conduct a review meeting. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be reviewed with all volunteers, employees, ministry coordinators and supervisors, and the leadership of the organization.
2. All employees and volunteers will complete a brief renewal application annually.
3. Should the renewal application indicate that any employees or volunteers have become unsuitable for working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, they will be removed immediately from their current position. They will not be considered for positions involving work with other similar groups.

YOUTH MINISTRY COMMUNICATION

Texting and electronic communication can be a vital part of youth ministry work, but their improper use can produce serious consequences.

Immanuel Lutheran Church desires to promote safety and to create a healthy environment for texting and electronic communication between its youth workers and students who participate in youth ministry activities. As a result, Immanuel Lutheran Church has developed the following guidelines:

1. Employee and volunteer youth workers who want to communicate with minors using text messaging, e-mail, social networking websites, or other forms of electronic media must first sign a consent form and attend a ministry training class. The class will outline the recommended practices, limitations, and legal parameters for texting and other forms of electronic communication within youth ministry.
2. Ministry youth workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities.
3. Except in an emergency, youth workers may not transmit any personal information pertaining to a minor without the youth ministry participant and his or her parents or guardians signing consent forms. This applies to group texting, group e-mail, or any other public method of electronic communication. Personal information may include such things as a minor's name, phone number, email address, or photograph.

4. Youth workers will discourage students from using cell phones during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a leader.
5. Youth workers will instruct youth occasionally about the Youth Ministry Communications Policy and the dangers of such conduct as “sexting.”
6. Youth workers who become aware of possible child abuse through electronic media must immediately notify their supervisor. The ministry will consult with its attorney and report abuse as required by law.
7. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels aren’t considered confidential.
8. To participate in ministry electronic communications, youth & their parent or guardian must sign a related consent form.
9. Youth who violate this policy may lose electronic communications privileges or be removed from the youth ministry program. The ministry’s pastoral leadership will notify parents immediately of any violation.
10. Youth workers on ministry business may never use a cell phone while driving—even hands-free—unless it’s an emergency.
11. Any texts or emails sent by ministry youth workers must go to a group rather than to individuals.

REVISION OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The leadership of this ministry, with the assistance of legal counsel, will regularly review this policy and the procedures established within it. If necessary, the policies and procedures will be modified in accordance with the bylaws of the organization. When changes are made, ministry leaders will communicate them to all employees and volunteers affected by the policy changes.

Reference: Brotherhood Mutual sample policy and Guidelines for Ministry Workers.

Review Date: July 2025

Policy Review/Revision Tracking:

Date	Reason for Review/Revision	Author

This document replaces and supersedes all previous versions of this policy.