

Memorial Lutheran Church
Youth and Children's Ministry Safety Policy

Our Lord Jesus proclaimed the importance of children's well being many times in his earthly ministry. He said to his disciples, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." He also said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:36-37, 42 ESV). Memorial Lutheran Church, in order to protect our children, youth and adult volunteers and to esteem our Lord's teachings, has put in place the following Youth and Children's Ministry Safety Policy.

For the purpose of this policy, **children and youth activities** include Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, youth program activities including bible studies and confirmation classes, any off-campus activity which includes children or youth without their parents or guardians, and any activity deemed to be a children or youth activity by the Board for Parish Education or the Board for Young People's Work. **Adult volunteers** are those 21 years old and older. **Young adult volunteers** are those over 17 years of age and under 21 years of age.

This policy assumes that any adult or young adult volunteer will obey all national, state and local laws and regulations at all times. This includes traffic laws and regulations and operating a vehicle with proper insurance, registration and valid safety inspection. All participants in children and youth activities should also strive for conduct pleasing to the Lord according to the 10 Commandments and Matthew 5:21-48.

1. Background Checks for Volunteers and Staff. All adult and young adult volunteers involved with our children and youth activities must submit to a background check. That background check shall be conducted by the Director of Finance. If the volunteer fails the background check, they will be asked not to participate in any children and youth activities.

2. Pastoral Approval. All adult and young adult volunteers desiring to participate in children and youth activities must have the approval of the pastors.

3. Two-by-Two Rule. All children and youth activities must have two adult or young adult leaders present in a supervisory role. At least one of these leaders must be an adult, although the other may be a young adult. Exceptions are limited to activities where only one adult is present with multiple youth or children for 5 minutes or less within the hearing or view of other adults (i.e.: VBS hometeams which travel from site to site on campus, or if an adult needs to leave a Sunday School class on a quick errand), or in a close caravan of two or more vehicles with only one adult driver per vehicle. For day time activities, an additional adult must be present beyond the first two for every additional 8 children or youth.

4. One-on-One Rule. Under no circumstances should an adult be one-on-one with a youth or child out of the view of another adult or young adult volunteer. Under no circumstances should an adult or young adult volunteer offer to keep a child or youth's secret unconditionally. If confidentiality is insisted on, please direct the child or youth to a pastor.

5. Physical Contact Rule. It is strictly forbidden for any adult or youth leader to touch, caress, or provide an extended hug to a youth or child under the age of 18. A hand shake or pat on the back is acceptable.

6. Driving Rule. Only adult volunteers shall be able to serve as drivers for off-campus events. Under no circumstances should young adult volunteers or youth be permitted to transport children or youth.

7. Overnight and Off-Campus Rule. For lock-ins, mission trips, or other off-campus activities involving both males and females, there shall be one adult volunteer of each sex for every 7 children or youth of that sex in the group. For example, a lock-in with 7 boys and 8 girls requires at least one man and two women adult and young adult volunteers. If shared bunk-house style is to be used, at least two volunteers, with at least one being an adult, will be housed with youth or children of the same sex. If tent camping, no child or youth is permitted to share a tent with an adult other than a parent or guardian. If hotel accommodations are used, adults and youth shall occupy separate rooms. Youth or children may only share a hotel room with a parent or guardian.

8. Privacy Rule. Adult and young adult volunteers are to respect and enforce the privacy of youth and children. They should not be present in restrooms and changing facilities unless there is a clear emergency, safety, or health concern. They should ensure that no recording devices are used in facilities like changing areas, showers, or restrooms where privacy would be expected.

9. Cameras and Internet Posting. It is strictly forbidden to capture pictures, video, or audio using a camera, cell phone or any other imaging device for the purpose of invading one's privacy. Should anyone act inappropriately with any such device, it will be confiscated immediately. It is forbidden to utilize social media to post anything that could be deemed inappropriate or an invasion of privacy.

10. Reporting Suspicious Behavior. Any adult, young adult, youth or child that suspects a violation of these rules, or a behavior which seems inappropriate, must report that violation or suspicion to a pastor or adult leader. If it is an adult volunteer whose behavior is suspect, the behavior should be reported to the pastor or another supervising adult.

11. Alcohol / Tobacco Use. Consumption of alcoholic beverage unless as part of the Sacrament of the Altar is prohibited during children and youth activities. Tobacco use is also prohibited in any area where children or youth may see those products in use.

12. Policy Acceptance. It is mandatory that anyone involved in children and youth activities understand and agree to this policy by signing below. If the policy is not adhered to, the volunteer understands that he or she may be forbidden to participate in youth activities indefinitely. Criminal behavior will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____