

## General Purpose Statement

Zion Lutheran seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Zion Lutheran from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

## Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

## Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

### a) Three Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving one on one contact with minors until she/he has been involved with Zion Lutheran for a minimum of three (3) months, however they are welcome to assist another volunteer in the ministry and care of minor child(ren) upon successful completion of a background check. This time of interaction between our leadership and the volunteer allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. If a child is distraught and needs comfort from a parent/guardian, the parent/guardian who has not been at Zion at least three months can stay with their child but not participate in any leadership with other children.

### b) Criminal Background Check

A criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in our Sunday School/Preschool/Nursery;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children (such as, church sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers).

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

The pastor will determine what disqualifying offense will be determined on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

## Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and the church will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

## Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

## Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 11 years old AND in 6th grade (summer workers will be considered by grade they are going into).
- Once a youth has reached the age of 18 they must be screened as specified above.
- If under 18 the worker must be under the supervision of an adult (18+).

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Zion Lutheran. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up.

## Medications Policy

It is the policy of Zion Lutheran not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care for less than 24 hours. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Any prescription medication that needs to be given on a daily basis for a chronic or life threatening condition (mental health, asthma, allergic reaction, seizures or a non-contagious illness) needs to be in a prescription labeled bottle with the child's name and dosage. The parents will address the situation with the leader of the event and with youth ministry staff to develop a plan of action. All medications will be administered by the same designated worker also attending the event.

If a child's condition is of concern to the leader of the event, the child's parent/guardian should be asked/required to attend the event. Screening policy should be administered in advance.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Zion Lutheran not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, shaking, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the leader of the event if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues. Actions done in the name of safety such as 'grabbing' a child to prevent them from harm should be considered necessary but investigated by the pastor, staff and leader of the event.

## **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.