

**CHILD AND YOUTH
ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM
FOR GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH
DECORAH, IA**

December, 2017

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH, DECORAH

Introduction

To help protect our children, Good Shepherd has adopted the following Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program. It is important that all Good Shepherd paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent abuse against children. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of Protection and Prevention, and an Acknowledgement to be signed by those people working with children.

Purpose

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist Good Shepherd in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.
4. *Volunteer*: Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.

5. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
6. *Physical Abuse*- Physical contact that causes harm or trauma to another person.
7. *Child Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.

Protection and Prevention Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence, except as needed for necessary intervention.

Employment Application: Any paid staff who will work with a minor must complete the Employment Application. The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application to apply for and qualify for service.

The Employment Application includes questions regarding:

- Current and previous residence addresses.
- Current and previous employment, including addresses, dates, duties, titles, and reasons for leaving.
- Names and addresses of schools attended and degree(s) earned.
- References from previous employers and organizations that serve children.
- Pending criminal charges (where not prohibited by state law).
- Criminal history information.

Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes Good Shepherd to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

Once an application is received and signed, the Pastor and Executive Committee will:

1. Review all statements made in the application, paying specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence. Pursue these gaps with employers listed and in a subsequent interview.
2. Conduct interviews with qualified applicants for employment.
If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, document the reasons for overriding the prior information.
3. Contact all listed references and employers for paid staff. Inquire as to the reason the applicant left and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.

Criminal Background Check: Good Shepherd will conduct a criminal background check on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All criminal background checks will be updated every two years. The Pastor and designee from the Education Committee will be responsible for the review of background checks of volunteers; the Pastor and a member of the Executive Committee will be responsible for checks on employees

All volunteers will be required to be review and sign the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. The Pastor and a designee appointed via the Education Committee will be entrusted with the treatment of any confidential information related to background checks. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be secured in the church office and access to it will be restricted.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, Good Shepherd:

1. Will have at least two screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
2. Will monitor facilities during activities involving children.
3. Will remind parents that it is the parents' responsibility to sign their children in to Sunday School and sign them out of Sunday School to assist in monitoring of children.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before the beginning of each school year. Will provide information regarding each trip before the trip.
5. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of Good Shepherd property.
6. Exceptions to the policy may be allowed if approved by the pastor and a member of the Education Committee.

Behavioral Guidelines for Religious Organization Paid Staff

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:

1. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
2. Whenever possible, at least two unrelated paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when minors are present. Speaking to a minor or minors one-on-one should be done in public settings where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.

3. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
4. Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.
5. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
6. If one-on-one support or pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
7. Anyone who observes abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Report any inappropriate conduct to the proper authorities and officials of Good Shepherd for handling.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.
4. Motor vehicle offenses that are deemed to present risk, including OWI, shall prohibit volunteer or employee transport of minors.

Sexual Offenders

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church may allow a person known to be a registered sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation but the congregation and offender must adhere to specific guidelines. A representative of the Executive Committee will first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children are present. The probation/parole officer will be asked to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions don't prohibit participation, Good Shepherd will implement the following four guidelines.

1. A registered sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way;
2. A registered sexual offender can only participate in worship services, weddings and funerals; and
3. A registered sexual offender must report in and be assigned to an escort who will accompany him or her at all times.
4. The identity of the sexual offender will be disclosed to the congregation.

Response to Abuse

Good Shepherd will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of abuse. All accusations of abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege sexual abuse and those who have been accused of abuse.

When an allegation is made involving abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The Pastor, and either the Council President or Vice President, will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If either of the above persons is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the other two individuals noted above will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities if criminal activity is alleged.
2. Report the matter to Good Shepherd's insurance carrier.
3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. Good Shepherd may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
5. An official of Good Shepherd (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the governing body of Good Shepherd and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.

6. An official of Good Shepherd will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
7. An official of Good Shepherd will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
8. During the investigation, an official of Good Shepherd shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
9. An official of Good Shepherd (and legal counsel or other consultants) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
10. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of Good Shepherd.
11. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.
12. Hire a consultant or assign a spokesperson to respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of Good Shepherd attorney.

Abuse Prevention Program Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. Good Shepherd reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the Good Shepherd or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of the Good Shepherd Abuse Prevention Program. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of the Good Shepherd.

Print Name

Signature

Date