

**Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
**Holden, Massachusetts**  
**Policy for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth**

**Introduction**

Immanuel Lutheran Church is committed to being a safe haven for children and youth – a place where children and other vulnerable persons are protected from all forms of exploitation and abuse. We believe that God has called us to create a community of faith where children and adults can participate together in ministry in a safe and secure environment. We therefore adopt this policy for the protection of children and prevention of abuse in our church.

**Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Policy for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth and the accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, emotional integrity, and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, teens, and adults. We have established this policy in order:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate within the faith community and activities of our congregation.
- To provide standards and procedures for evaluating a person's suitability to work with children and youth in our congregation.
- To satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members that we have employed a comprehensive screening process for all volunteer parish workers.
- To provide a system which quickly and thoroughly responds to the victims of any abuse or inappropriate behavior, to their families, as well as to the accused.
- To reduce the possibility of false accusations against clergy, employees and volunteers.
- To satisfy the requirements of our insurance providers and to reduce the risk exposure of our parish.
- To accomplish the above while maintaining an environment and atmosphere of trust and respect grounded in Christian love and compassion.

**Conclusion**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs. A Safe Church Committee will be formed to monitor the implementation of all procedures and to review this policy and the accompanying procedures annually. Revisions will be presented to the Congregation Council for approval.

## **Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth**

The following procedures are to be followed to aid in protecting our children, youth and adult leaders in children and youth ministries:

### **A. Hiring and Recruiting Workers**

1. A completed Participation Covenant will be required from all volunteer workers and employees.
2. All volunteer workers with children and youth will have been actively involved in the worship and ministries of this congregation for at least six months before assuming the volunteer assignment in ministries involving children and youth.
3. All adult volunteers and employees in ministries involving children and youth will have passed a criminal offender record information (CORI) check before assuming an assignment in such ministries. CORI checks must be renewed every three years.
4. Anyone with a prior conviction of any form of child abuse will not be eligible to work with children/youth in any capacity. (If the Pastor is aware of other at-risk behaviors in an individual's past, he/she should discourage the participation of that individual in children/youth related activities with no explanation required to the group recruiting that person. This would protect the confidentiality of the Pastor/parishioner relationship as well as protecting the safety of the children.)
5. All information obtained from the CORI background check will be held in strict confidence and kept in a locked file at the church.

### **B. Providing A Safe Environment**

1. Immanuel Lutheran Church will offer annually:
  - a. Orientation and training for all workers in ministries involving children and youth.
  - b. First Aid/CPR Training as needed.
2. The primary or lead worker in all ministries involving children and youth will be at least eighteen years of age. (For church-sponsored programs involving teenagers, the adult worker who will be present and assume primary responsibility shall be at least 5 years older than the oldest teen participant in the program.)
3. For events and activities which take place at times other than Sunday morning or away from the church building, the ratio adults to children or youth will be at least 1:6. At least two trained adult workers will be present at all times during any non-Sunday morning church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and youth.
4. At no time should a child or youth be alone with an adult (with the exception of pastoral staff in special circumstances, provided that they have previously notified another staff member).
5. At no time will any worker engage in physical discipline of a minor. Verbal discipline must never be demeaning or abusive. Any discipline problems should be reported to the child's parents.
6. A signed parental permission slip will be required for all events held off site.
7. Immanuel Lutheran Church will provide and maintain safe and appropriate equipment and supervision during church sponsored activities on church property.

8. Any incident/injury a minor that occurs on church property, or under the jurisdiction of the church, must be reported on the *Incident Report Form* as soon as possible after the incident occurs. A copy of this report is to be provided to the parents/guardians of the child involved, the Pastor and to the Safe Church Committee (to be reviewed).
9. During Sunday School Class times, the Christian Education Director, or someone she designates will monitor the class room activity. Where possible the classroom doors will be left open.
10. All workers in ministries involving children and youth will be encouraged to participate in an annual orientation which will include a review of these policies and procedures, and be required to sign a participation covenant (every three years) to uphold these policies and procedures.

### **C. Basic Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

1. When an allegation of child abuse is made against a worker in the church, the parents of the child will be notified immediately. The person who receives the report of the allegation of abuse will place the child who is the alleged victim of the abuse in a secure area, with the supervision of at least two adults not involved in the abuse incident, until the child's parents arrive.
2. The alleged abuser will be told of the allegation immediately. If the alleged abuser is a minor, his/her parents will be notified immediately. This person will be immediately removed from further participation in church-sponsored programs that involve children and youth. Based on the final outcome of the abuse allegation, the person's further involvement in church-sponsored programs involving children and youth will be the decision of the Congregation Council.
3. The pastor will be notified immediately of the abuse allegation. Depending on the seriousness of the allegation, the pastor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate authorities (including the state Department of Early Education and Care [DEEC], the NE Synod, the congregation's insurance agent, and the congregation's attorney). Any person with responsibility for the care of children is required to make a report to the DEEC if they have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or if they have observed conditions that would reasonably result in child abuse.
4. The pastor will also serve as the sole media spokesperson, making any necessary statements or responses to the news media. The identities of the child who is the alleged victim, the child's parents, and the alleged abuser will be kept confidential.
5. The pastor or a person designated by the pastor will prepare a brief, carefully worded statement to the congregation, telling the truth, but withholding the names of the alleged victim and the accused.
6. When a pastor is accused of abuse, the NE Synod Office of the Bishop will be notified immediately and assume the responsibilities assigned to the Pastor in items C.3,4,5 above.

## Immanuel Lutheran Church Incident Report

Any incident/injury involving a minor that occurs on church property, or under the jurisdiction of the church, must be reported on this form on the day the incident occurs.

• Date of incident/injury: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

• Location: \_\_\_\_\_

• Individual(s) involved: *Name(s), Age(s)* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• What happened? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Brief description of injury and care given: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• Person in charge where incident/injury occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Signature** of person making the report: \_\_\_\_\_

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• When were parents/guardians notified? *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

By Whom? \_\_\_\_\_

• Parent/Guardian (*Name, Address, Phone Number*) of injured: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• **Signature of parent/guardian** (*at time of notification*): \_\_\_\_\_

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*\*A copy of this report is to be provided to the parents/guardians of the child involved, the Pastor and to the Safe Church Committee (to be reviewed).*

## **Immanuel Lutheran Church Employee Participation Covenant**

The congregation of Immanuel Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, volunteers, and employees who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. Adults who have been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) shall not be accepted to work with children or youth in any church sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's Pastors before accepting an assignment.
3. All adults involved with children or youth of our church must have a CORI check and reference check before beginning work with children or youth.
4. Employees working with children and youth shall take care that no child is ever left unattended and that no adult or youth assistant is ever unmonitored with children or youth.
5. Employees working with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
6. Employees shall immediately report to their supervisors or the Pastor any signs of abuse or behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

**Please answer each of the following questions:**

1. As an employee of this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
2. As an employee of this congregation do you agree to be monitored by another non-related adult as you work with children and youth? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
3. As an employee of this congregation, do you agree to a CORI check and reference check before beginning work with children and youth? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
4. As an employee of this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your assignment? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
5. As an employee of this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor or the Pastor? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
6. As an employee of this congregation, do you agree to inform the Pastor of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse or other criminal offense? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

*All employees of this congregation are strongly encouraged to confidentially share with a pastor of this congregation any personal experience as a victim of child abuse.*

I have read this **Participation Covenant**, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print full name \_\_\_\_\_