

**Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church**  
**POLICY TO PREVENT ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

Revised 6/3/2013

**I. VISION STATEMENT**

Our vision is connecting to Jesus' pathway of joy and life. In keeping with this mission Christ Our Shepherd seeks to provide a caring environment for children safe from physical and sexual abuse.

**II. SUPERVISION**

There will be two (2) supervisors present when caring for minor children/youth under the auspices of Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church. Optimally, two adults (age 21 or older) will be available, however, one (1) supervisor must be an adult (age 21 or older) the other supervisor must be age 16 or older. In special circumstances, with approval from the appropriate program Ministry Leaders, youth (age 14 or older) may be allowed to supervise children when an unrelated adult (age 21 or older) is present.

In the event that enough workers are not present to have two supervisors in each class or event, the supervisor must take steps to compensate. Some possible solutions include: open classroom doors, roving second worker who randomly moves from one class to another, having a worker available to go to any class where a worker has a situation where he might be alone with one child. Planning and staffing for two people is to be the norm.

In all cases, supervisors must have completed training as follows:

Age 18 and older: Prevention of Abuse Training

Age 14-17: Baby-sitter course

Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church reserves the right to conduct screening and background checks on all staff members and volunteers that work with children. By signing this document, you indicate your knowledge of this policy and your approval for screening and background checks. You will be required to provide information required for such screening and background checks on a separate form.

No staff member or other supervisor should be alone with an unrelated child or youth, whether at church facilities, or at any off-site activity. If one-on-one counseling is required, doors should be left open unless the facility is such that those present in a closed area may be clearly observed by others.

Overnight Functions: No adult should share a room with a child or youth (unless they are related to that child/youth), without a second adult present at all times. Youth may be in one room together, while one or more adults are in an adjoining room.

Other situations: No staff member or volunteer should be alone with a child or youth in their car. If a situation arises, and a child or youth requires transportation, another unrelated adult (minimum age 18) should be present.

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No one person should be left on church premises alone with children or youth, waiting for parents to pick them up. At least two supervisors, as noted previously, should stay until all children or youth have been retrieved by parents or other authorized persons.

### III. APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

In keeping with our mission, Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church seeks to provide a Christian environment where minors will be safe from physical and sexual abuse and will feel safe, secure and valued. Adult caretakers are to be models of Christ's love as they relate to minors. Everyone is a child of God and as such should treat each other with respect.

The following are appropriate behaviors for adults to use in relating to minors when working or volunteering for the church.

- A. Listen carefully to children and show interest in what they have to say.
- B. Pray that our children may grow in faith in God and respect for each other and creation.
- C. Be fair and consistent.
- D. Have a sense of humor, be flexible and giving, smile often.
- E. Focus on positive behaviors and praise him/her for that behavior.
- F. Set clear limits that can be managed by adults and understood by children.
- G. Use appropriate, positive, steps when discipline is needed and focus on the behavior, not the child.

### IV. PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR

The following behaviors, particularly those defined by the Law of the State of Georgia, are prohibited for all paid employees and volunteers of Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church.

- A. Corporal Punishment, which is use of physical force to discipline a child.
- B. Physical abuse, which is any physical injury inflicted by an adult on a child by other than accidental means.
- C. Sexual abuse, which is a person's employing, using persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor to engage in any sexual act as defined by the Law of the State of Georgia., or by engaging in any sexual acts as defined by the State of Georgia in front of any minor child.
- D. Sexual exploitation, which is conduct by a child's parent or caretaker that allows, permits, encourages or requires that a child engage in prostitution or child pornography.
- E. Inappropriate touching or fondling of a sexual nature of a minor by any person.

### V. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Law of the State of Georgia requires all "Child Service Organization Personnel" who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made as provided by law. The State of Georgia defines "Child Service Organization Personnel" as "[P]ersons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children."

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Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church directs all mandated reporters to comply with the requirements of the law. Reasonable cause is defined as “a suspicion founded upon circumstances sufficiently strong to warrant a reasonable person to believe that something is true.” If you suspect any type of abuse, Christ Our Shepherd requires you to report any suspicion of abuse you may have.

Any person or official required by Georgia law to report suspected cases of child abuse and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. A misdemeanor is a crime that is less serious than a felony, but can still be punishable by fine or incarceration in a county jail.

Reporting Alleged Violations to the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) The senior pastor of his/her designate shall report all alleged violations to the Southeast Synod office of the ELCA when the alleged violator is a member of the clergy or associate in ministry.

**VI. REPORTING PROCESS**

All paid personnel and volunteers of Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church are to report alleged violations of prohibited behaviors to the staff person associated with their ministry. That staff person shall report to the senior pastor. All such reports shall be made in compliance with the law of the State of Georgia. This entire reporting process should be within 24 hours.

When reporting, be prepared to provide the following information if known:

- i. Name, age, home address and current location of the child
- ii. Name and address of the child's parents or caretakers
- iii. Name and address of suspected perpetrator, if known
- iv. Locations where abuse took place, if known
- v. Nature and extent of injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries
- vi. Any other information the reporter believes might be helpful

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Sign and Return

**POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church (“COS”) Policy to Prevent Abuse of Children and will abide by all of the covenants when working with COS children and youth.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

AKNOWLEDGEMENT – PARTICIPATION IN THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE CLASS

I acknowledge that I have attended and participated in the “Christ Our Shepherd – Prevention of Abuse” class.

Date of class: \_\_\_\_\_