

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
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*This policy was adopted by Zion's Congregation Council on
October 15, 2013 and was implemented beginning October 16, 2013.*

*First revision
6-17-14*

Permission is granted for other congregations to use whatever portions
may be helpful.

CHILDREN, MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL
SAFETY POLICY
Zion Lutheran Church
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Zion Lutheran Church is a spiritual community committed to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and teenagers that participate in the several young discipleship ministries. A cadre of volunteers* significantly enhance the value and success of these ministries. All volunteers serving in leadership roles in these ministries are living out the vows taken in baptism to nurture our children and teenagers in the Christian faith. Volunteers play a key role in fostering spiritual development of individuals and families in our church community.

In the current social milieu it is imperative that the conduct of volunteer responsibilities reflect the commitment of Zion Lutheran Church through its Council approved policy to provide a safe environment for all children, teenagers and volunteers that participate in its sponsored ministries.

In an effort to provide a safe and nurturing community for volunteers, children and teenagers, the church requires volunteers to commit to a data collection and an oversight process. Explicit procedures are followed to assure consistency in the conduct of young discipleship ministries. All volunteers participating in ZLC Young Discipleship Ministries are required to review the church policy and procedures at an orientation session, provide personal information specified in the attached forms, and understand that each volunteer working with our Young Discipleship Ministries will be under the supervision of an identified staff member.

The locus of responsibility for implementation and oversight of this policy is the ZLC Director of Young Discipleship Ministries and is so noted in that Position Description.

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS* PARTICIPATING IN ZION'S
YOUNG DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

1. Every person desiring to participate in these ministries as a volunteer must familiarize himself or herself with the child safety policy statement and agree to it by signing the form provided. He or she must also provide the names of two non-family related individuals who are familiar with his/her character as it relates to working with children and/or teenagers. These references will be contacted and, additionally, a background check will be completed. Background checks will be conducted as stipulated on page 8 of this document for all volunteers and paid staff.
2. Lead volunteers in each area of Young Discipleship Ministries. (Nursery, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Confirmation/Middle School Ministries, High School Ministries) must be active participants in this church for at least 6 months prior to volunteering their services in Young Discipleship Ministries.

3. For each specific Young Discipleship Ministry area, specific policies must be known to volunteers and followed. The variances among the age specific ministries are described below.
4. Any person that is currently under investigation for, or who has been convicted of any of the following will not be permitted to serve as a volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program for children, middle school or high school youth.
 - Criminal sexual conduct
 - Neglect of a child
 - Physical abuse of self or others
 - Assault
 - Making threats to do harm to any person
5. Volunteers are required to immediately report to the ministry staff supervisor any observed behaviors of any persons that seem inappropriate or abusive.

VOLUNTEER* PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC MINISTRIES
(Additional to the General Procedures)

Zion's Cooperative Nursery

The "two adult" rule applies (i.e. one adult will not be left alone with one child) OR the door to the room will either be open or have a window that provides public view. The assigned ZLC staff person supervises all childcare.

Prior to participation in nursery care, all parents will complete the volunteer information form specific to the nursery ministry.

Due to the nature of the nursery, parents desiring to remain with their child(ren), even the firsttime that they visit Zion, are allowed to assist in the nursery (but not responsible for providing care), until completing the volunteer information form.

Bibleland Sunday School

In each classroom the "two adult" rule applies (i.e. one adult will not be left alone with one child) OR the door to the room will either be open or have a window that provides public view.

All rooms on the second floor not used by the Sunday School on Sunday mornings during the Sunday School hour shall have their doors either closed and locked or blocked open. The Sunday School Program has safe and appropriate procedures currently in place for handling the bathroom needs of the children.

Vacation Bible School

The lead volunteer in each classroom and center (crafts, snacks, recreation, opening/closing) shall be an active congregational participant and complete the volunteer information form.

There will always be two volunteers with a group of children OR they will be in a room with a door that is open OR that has a window that provides public view OR they will be outdoors in public view.

For this week, teenagers and parents whose children are enrolled in VBS and come from either another congregation in the community or have accepted Zion's invitation may participate as helpers in VBS.

Confirmation and Middle School Ministry

There will be two staff/volunteer with at least two youth "two adult" rule OR there will be one staff/volunteer with a group in a room with the door open OR that has a window that provides public view.

Individual student meetings scheduled with a pastor or any other adult will require parental permission specified on the ministry registration form. This consent gives permission for unsupervised one-on-one conversations. In the absence of parental permission for 1:1 conversation, two adults must be present.

For regularly scheduled official fellowship and/or service events the "two adult" rule applies.

On/Off-Campus Sleepover Guidelines

The "two adult" rule will be followed. The goal is to have an adult/student ratio of no less than one adult to 10 youth.

Signed parental permission forms (including emergency contacts, release of liability, medical emergency authorization) will be secured for any sleepover activity.

As long as any youth are awake, one adult must also be awake.

Separate sleeping quarters will be designated for males and females and will be properly supervised with same gender adults.

Adults will use good judgment regarding PG or PG13 movies. NO R rated movies shall be permitted.

High School Ministry

For regularly scheduled events there will be two adults (may be any combination of staff/volunteer) with any group of youth.

For regularly scheduled small groups meeting in private homes, the same "two adult" rule will apply.

If/when a student requests a private conversation with a staff/volunteer, every attempt must be made to hold such conversations in a public place (restaurant, park) or in a room that provides public view, whether on or off church property. The student and staff/volunteer together will determine if and how to inform the parent(s) of such conversations on a case-by-case basis. In any event, the staff/volunteer is to notify the church office as to title, time, and location of such meetings. The content of student/staff/volunteer conversations will be held in confidence unless the principles articulated in the Safety Policy are violated. For special events (usually one time or annual), specific staff/volunteer guidelines may be indicated but in every instance parental knowledge of the guidelines and parental permission for student participation is required.

Volunteers are expected to share identified issues/problems of high school ministry participants to the Director of Youth Discipleship and seek advice and counsel on management where indicated. When deemed appropriate, individuals may be recommended for professional intervention.

Ratio of Adults with Background Checks to Student

Age Range	Ratio Adult^ : Student	Comment
Nursery (0-3)	1:3*	If an adult no ARC babysitting course is necessary
Preschool – K	1:4	
Elementary Youth	1:6	
Middle School Youth	1:10	
High School Youth	1:10	
Any Overnight Trip	1:5+	Need to be trained in First Aid, CPR & AED

***Must be 16 years of age and be trained in American Red Cross Babysitting Coursework**

^Adults must comply with all other policies outlined in this document

+Need one adult trained in First Aid, CPR & AED if location does not provide a trained person

Note: wherever cited in this document, "Volunteer" is defined as an adult or mature teenager with active participation in the life of the ZLC congregation and who has completed the required screening and training to serve a defined role in the young discipleship ministries.

CARE OF DOCUMENTS

Application forms, reference forms

1. All volunteer forms including the Zion Child Safety Policy will soon be available on the Zion Lutheran Church website for download. In the meantime these forms are available in the church office. Each volunteer is required to complete an application and return it to the church Financial Director. Zion Lutheran Church will then proceed with the appropriate background search with an approved agency. Background checks will be performed upon initial recruitment and every third year thereafter of continued service or on an as need basis at no cost to the volunteer.
2. All volunteers will be responsible to take a Youth Protection Training course. One is immediately available on line via the Boy Scouts of America (myscouting.org). Create your own account and password. Once you complete the course you will be given a certificate of completion. Please turn in your certificate along with your application to your Young Discipleship Staff.
2. All information will be treated in a confidential manner. Except in the case of a response to a report of suspicious activity, only appropriate professional staff will have access to the information on these documents. In the case of a report of suspicious activity, the "Response Team" (see page 7) and appropriate legal authorities will have access to the information.
3. Once reviewed and screened, all documents will be kept on the premises in secure storage.
4. The appropriate staff persons will contact all references, before the volunteer begins service. Each reference will be asked if she/she knows of any reason why the volunteer should not work with children/youth.
5. Documentation must be made for each reference call by Young Discipleship Staff. Written information received from these reference calls will be retained, and will then be stored in a secure location.
6. After a 10-year period, the applications and reference check records will be destroyed.
7. Each new Director of Young Discipleship will be made aware of and required to review the information stored on the computer databases.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Take all allegations seriously. Be gentle and protective of both victim and alleged abuser.

Initial reporting of suspicious activity - report maker:

1. Any suspicious activity brought to the attention of a volunteer must be reported immediately to the appropriate person or persons:
 - the lead staff person in each ministry area – nursery, Sunday School, middle school/confirmation, high school or a volunteer with supervisory responsibilities a pastor
2. The person making the report of abuse or receiving the report of suspicious activity will document what, when, where, and how, and the date, time, and circumstances under which the report was made.

Initial procedures - report receiver:

3. The person receiving the initial report of suspicious activity will report immediately to the Senior pastor who will immediately inform the Finance Manager, church legal counsel, and the church insurer.
4. The reporting staff member/volunteer and the Senior Pastor will determine if further action is to be taken, which may involve interviewing the appropriate persons.

Preliminary action/options, depending on probable cause or not:

5. The alleged abuser will be required to refrain from all children and youth activities until it is determined if further action shall be taken. To protect all parties involved, care will be taken to handle this in a discrete manner.
6. After reviewing the reported circumstances, if the appropriate person receiving the report and the Senior pastor determine that there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect (as defined by the State of Michigan's child Protection law), then further action will be taken as described in the section entitled "Responding to Allegations of Abuse or Neglect." (See appendix 1 for the definitions of "child abuse", "child neglect", "sexual abuse" and "sexual exploitation", as defined by the State of Michigan's Child Protection Law.)
7. If no reasonable cause is determined, persons making this decision have the option to recommend another appropriate action, e.g. further investigation, a review of the process in that ministry area, and further education.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Take all allegations seriously. Be gentle and protective of both victim and, alleged abuser.

If it is determined that there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, the following steps will be taken:

1. Document what, when, where, and how, and the date, time and circumstances under which the report was made. All appropriate persons may be interviewed.
2. A "Response Team" will be assigned to take further action. The response team will consist of (1) the senior pastor, (2) the finance manager, (3) two members of the congregation council appointed by the senior pastor, and (4) a mental health professional who may or may not be a member of the congregation. The response team will promptly:
 - a. contact victim's parents
 - b. prepared a written interview of the alleged victim
 - c. contact local civil authorities as appropriate or required by law
 - d. document all efforts to hand the situation
3. The response team, under the guidance of the church legal counsel, insurance carrier and other appropriate parties, will conduct a preliminary investigation and make recommendations within 48 hours of the report. The response team will:
 - a. conduct initial investigations into the allegations
 - b. document all findings and all efforts in the investigation
 - c. make appropriate recommendations of (1) any further legal investigations necessary and (2) further informal investigation
 - d. present recommendations to authorities
 - e. appoint one sole spokesperson
 - f. cooperate with the local and state authorities, as appropriate or required by law
4. The spokesperson must present a clear position statement of the church regarding child abuse and include policies and established safeguards. This person will be the only person communicating to the press and to authorities.
5. The spokesperson will give information to the congregation on.
6. The ministerial staff will provide appropriate counseling.