



300 West Maple Road  
Linthicum, Maryland 21090-2434  
410-859-0020  
Fax: 410-859-1375  
[www.sjlc.org](http://www.sjlc.org)

The Rev. Dr. Michael R. McQuaid  
Senior Pastor

## **Child and Youth Protection Policy**

### **General Purpose Statement**

St John Evangelical Lutheran Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in church programs and activities. The goal of the Child and Youth Protection Policy is to protect the children and youth of St John from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while also protecting church staff and volunteers from false or retributive accusations. **This policy does not apply to St John CO-OP Nursery School which operates separately from St John Lutheran church. The Nursery School is regulated by the State of Maryland. Their protection policy is attached at the end of this document. The St John CO-OP Nursery School is covered on the St John Lutheran Church insurance policy under a separate insurance rider.**

### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “minor/s”, “child”, “children” and “youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years of age.

Employee / Staff– a person who is hired to work at St John.

Permanent Volunteer – a person who is background check approved.

Temporary Assistant - a person not approved to have unsupervised access to youth. Temporary assistants are only permitted access to youth when under the direct supervision of an approved employee and or permanent volunteer.

### **Selection of Staff and Permanent Volunteers**

All employees and permanent volunteers who will have unsupervised access to children participating in church programs and activities will be screened prior to engaging in those programs. The Pastor/s, Youth Group and Christian Education Committees will be responsible for completing screenings of all employees and volunteers as applicable. This screening includes the following:

#### **a. Six Month Rule**

Preference for permanent volunteers for any position involving contact with minors will be given to those who have been members of St John or nonmembers known to St. John for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction

between church leadership and members and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Applicants known to St. John for less than six months may be selected when volunteers known to St. John for six months are not available for the duty needed.

**b. Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children as an employee or permanent volunteer must complete and sign a written application on a form supplied by the church. The application will request basic information from the applicant including references and disclosure of any previous criminal arrests and/or convictions. The application form will be maintained in a confidential file by St John. (See Part g. for current employees and permanent volunteers working with children)

**c. Personal Interview**

The appropriate committee will review the application, and as needed, conduct a face-to-face interview with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

Committees and groups involving children/youth can accept new volunteers based on an appropriate committee's recommendation. Recommendations from the committee/group are required to be recorded by the committee. Minutes of the meetings and all actions taken shall be submitted to the Congregation Council.

**d. Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to become a permanent volunteer and work with children, his/her application will be reviewed and appropriate action will be taken. Preferred references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references. In the event references are not available, approval must be given from the appropriate committee. Such approval must be documented and reported to congregation council. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in a confidential file by St John.

**e. Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for all volunteers who have uncontrolled access to children.

- Those who will have unsupervised access to children in the Sunday school, Confirmation, church nursery, youth group, and/or vacation bible school programs; (Note: As stated in the "Two adult rule" section below, if a supervising adult is not available, a parent of a child in the group may, on a temporary basis, supervise the group.)
- Those who will be staying over during overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- **Those driving children/youth, other than their own children/youth in motor vehicles;**
- Those involved in one-on-one mentoring of minors; and

- Those having occasional, unsupervised one-on-one contact with minors (e.g., church-sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers)

Before a background check is completed, prospective permanent volunteers will be required to sign an authorization form allowing the St. John Lutheran Church to complete the background check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will not be permitted to work in any capacity that allows for unsupervised access of children.

The Senior Pastor, or designated administrator, will be solely responsible for and authorized to review each of the background check reports. The Senior Pastor, or designated administrator, will maintain all reports in a locked and confidential file accessible only to him/her. Based on the results of the background check, applicants approved will be cleared for service or denied access to children. Either the Senior Pastor, or the designated administrator, will make a report to the appropriate committee as to the acceptability of the applicant. The report will not divulge specific information contained in the report and will make only a recommendation of the suitability of the applicant for the subject position. This procedure will ensure the confidentiality of the information contained in the report.

Disqualifying information will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will include an evaluation of all of the applicable circumstances. Generally, arrests or convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to the church mission will preclude an applicant from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying circumstance.

The criminal background check will be updated for all employees and permanent volunteers every 3 years.

#### **f. Current Volunteers/Workers**

Those employees and permanent volunteers who have been working with children for at least one year prior to October 1, of 2013, are exempt from sections a, b, c, and d above, but will still have to agree to a Criminal Background check per section e.

#### **Two Adult Rule**

It is the goal of St. John to have a minimum of two unrelated adult staff/permanent volunteers to be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during church programs and activities. If a supervising adult is not available, a parent of a child in the group may, on a temporary basis, supervise the group. 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.. Church policy strongly discourages supervision of minors while alone with one adult on church premises or in any church sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

## **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect**

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

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and/or biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when a child is subjected to a negative environment, 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 their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- Ritual Abuse - Psychological, sexual, spiritual, and/or physical assault, which is committed by one or more people whose primary motive is to fulfill a prescribed ritual in order to achieve a specific goal or satisfy a perceived need.

Church employees, permanent volunteers and temporary assistants may become aware of suspected abuse or neglect of children who are under the care and custody of church staff and volunteers. In the event that an individual involved in the care of a child or children at St John becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child should report the facts and circumstances of the alleged abuse immediately to the Senior Pastor and/or Congregation Council President for further action, including reporting to authorities as required by Maryland State law.

### **Maryland Department of Child Protective Services Requirements for Reporting Abuse or Neglect:**

**You should report suspected abuse or neglect to the local department of social services or to a local law enforcement agency.**

If you are a health practitioner, educator, human service worker or a police officer, you are required to report both orally and in writing any suspected child abuse or neglect.

Suspected abuse or neglect should be reported to:

Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services

Child Protective Services

Tel: (410) 421-8400

FAX: (410) 508-2041

Address: 7500 Ritchie Hwy

Glen Burnie, Maryland 21061-1787

Oral reports should be made immediately and written reports must be made within 48 hours of

contact which disclose the suspected abuse or neglect.

A report must include:

- The name and home address of the child and the parent or other individual responsible for the care of the child;
- The present location of the child;
- The age of the child;
- Names and ages of other children in the home;
- The nature and extent of injuries or sexual abuse or neglect of the child
- Any information relayed by the individual making the report of previous possible physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
- Information available to the individual reporting that might aid in establishing the cause of the injury or neglect;
- The identity of the individual or individuals responsible for abuse or neglect

*If reporting abuse or neglect of a child involving mental injury, a description of the substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function that was observed and identified and why it is believed to be attributable to an act of maltreatment or omission of proper care and attention.*

All reports of abuse must be made to the local departments of social services and the appropriate law enforcement agency. To initiate prompt handling of the report of suspected child abuse or neglect, employees of a local department of social services must make a report to the protective services unit.

### **Church Policies for Reporting and Adjudicating Reports of Abuse and Neglect by Employees, Permanent Volunteers and Temporary Assistants**

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

- 1) The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- 2) The employee, permanent volunteer or temporary assistant alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
- 3) The church insurance company will be notified, and an incident report will be completed.
- 4) Church staff, permanent volunteers and temporary assistants will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
- 5) Church staff will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. Staff should act only in consultation with the church insurance provider and/or attorney.
- 6) The Senior Pastor in consultation with the appropriate committee will determine if the involved person will be allowed to return as a staff, permanent volunteer or temporary assistants for church activities that involve minors.
- 7) If required and deemed appropriate, a church media spokesperson, accompanied by the Senior Pastor may speak to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other staff and permanent volunteers and temporary assistants should refrain from speaking to the media.

8) A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

### **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 church sponsored activities involving minors are ongoing inside the room. If there is a window in the door, it is required to remain clear and uncovered at all times.

### **Controlled Access**

The church will allow family members/guardians to visit and/or participate during church sponsored events as long as they participate under the supervision of an employee/permanent volunteer who has passed a background check. This will allow younger children to become familiar with their teachers and surroundings while their family member or guardians are with them.

The approved St John employee/permanent volunteer shall be present at all times and remain in control of their area. Children and youth shall not be left unattended.

Parents or guardians are granted this limited access at the sole discretion of St John staff/permanent volunteers. In cases when parents or guardians become disruptive, the Senior Pastor will be notified and appropriate actions taken.

This controlled access policy applies to all on site events and activities at St John. Events not at our facility will require all adults to be in compliance with the background check and driving sections of this policy.

### **Teenage Workers**

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

- Workers must be at least 13 years of age.
- Workers will be screened as specified above, except for the criminal background check.
- Workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

### **Arrival/Departure Procedures**

No child below grade 3 will be released from Sunday school unless they are picked up at the classroom by an authorized adult or an older sibling. A sign in and sign out sheet will be used for all children in this category. When a child is registered for Sunday school, the parent/guardian will list all persons who are authorized to sign out their child from the Sunday school classroom. The list should be exhaustive and include, if applicable, parents, grandparents, other authorized adults and older siblings. If the child is to be signed out by anyone not listed on the registration list, the child must bring in a note signed by the parent/guardian specifically authorizing that individual, by name, to pick up the child. In the event of any discrepancy; i.e., an unauthorized person arrives to pick up the child the Sunday School Superintendent or Pastor will be contacted. The Superintendent or Pastor will be responsible for releasing the child to an appropriate and authorized custodian or the local authorities if warranted.

## **Sick Child Policy**

The church desires to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at St John. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under the church's care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT attend activities:

- 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 to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted and required to pick up the child for the day.

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of St John not to administer prescription or non-prescription medications to the children while engaged in church activities. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Sunday School Superintendent to develop a plan of action.

If youth requiring medication are traveling away from St John for any church activity, all youth leaders involved are required to be notified of the medical needs of the child. An appropriate plan of action shall be prepared by the parent / guardian in conjunction with the youth leaders prior to departure.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of St John not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Staff and volunteers should consult the Sunday School Superintendent or Youth Group Leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Parents/guardians of children that are consistently disruptive during church sponsored activities will meet with the appropriate teacher/staff person to develop an action plan to remediate the problem. If necessary, parents/guardians of disruptive children will be required to remain on the church property during activities. If the activity is away from the church property, a plan of action to deal with and remediate the disruptive child will be developed with the involved staff. This may require the parent/guardian to travel to the activity site for the duration of the activity.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The staff or permanent volunteer should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside.

The staff or permanent volunteers should remain outside the bathroom door and then escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For children over the age of five that need assistance, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, staff and permanent volunteers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class or activity.

### **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under church 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. If warranted, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed for cases requiring treatment by a medical professional.

### **Driving Youth to and from meetings and events**

Occasionally children may need a ride to and/or from official church activities and meetings. Adults providing transportation for children, other than their own, must be at least 21 years of age. All drivers must hold a current valid driver's license and have auto insurance for the vehicle being driven. The parent/guardian of the child being transported must provide written approval for the transportation prior to departing for the activity. In the event of an emergency, such as a child being stranded without a ride, then verbal permission may be obtained from the parent/guardian to provide the necessary ride for the child.

### **Training**

Training will be provided by St. John on –best practices with regard to child protection to all current and new employees and permanent volunteers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All employees and permanent volunteers are required to complete training. Acknowledgement of the training will be kept on file.



## **Compliance**

A Youth Protection Team (YPT) will be formed and tasked with the implementation and maintenance of this policy. The YPT will maintain a checklist for every volunteer. The YPT will meet annually with the Senior Pastor and the appropriate committees to ensure all volunteers are in compliance with this policy. The team will consist of three members selected from the Christian Education and Youth Group Committees. The senior pastor will report to the YPT any candidate who is not acceptable for service after reviewing the criminal background checks.

The YPT will not review or handle any confidential information obtained through the criminal background check. Privacy of all personal information will be maintained and will be secured and under the control of the Senior Pastor. See attached checklist

### **St. John's Nursery School Background Check Policy**

The Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Child Care has advised St. John's Nursery School, that only our teachers need to have a background check. While we are a cooperative school, with parents helping in the classroom, a parent is never alone with a student. We routinely have 3 parents plus a teacher in the classroom. The children's restrooms are located in the three-year-old classroom. If a student needs assistance the teacher in the three-year-old classroom assists the student.

Updated October 9, 2013

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300 West Maple Rd  
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## **Child and Youth Protection Policy Volunteer Compliance Checklist**

Either a paper checklist or online tracking system will compile pertinent information about employees and volunteers including: contact information, background check, training compliance and recertification date. A sample of such a checklist is shared below.

### **SAMPLE CHECKLIST:**

Volunteer Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date beginning membership \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Senior Pastor Criminal Background Check acceptable  
(Must be updated at a minimum of every 3 years)

Date of Current Report \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Annual Compliance Training

Training conducted by \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Policy acknowledgement signed and date

Verified by \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and date \_\_\_\_\_

St John Evangelical Lutheran Church

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## **Child and Youth Protection Policy Acknowledgement**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name), do acknowledge that on \_\_\_\_\_ date; I did receive a copy of the St John Child and Youth Protection policy.

I have read and do understand the policy. I agree to comply with all provisions contained in the policy in order to maintain a safe environment for all Children and Youth attending St John programs and events.

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Signature

Date: