



Wittenberg Lutheran Church

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CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY PROGRAM FOR WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH

Adopted 9/13/20

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Introduction

To help protect children, **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** has adopted the following Child and Youth Safety Program. It is important that all **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to improve safety and help prevent emotional, physical, and sexual 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:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** 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 abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, deacon, 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*: Means 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. *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.

7. *Physical Abuse*: An intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person by way of bodily contact.
8. *Family Member*: A person who is a spouse, former spouse, child, stepchild, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, niece, nephew, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother, sister, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law, including adoptive relationships.
9. *Executive Committee*: Consists of the officers of **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH**: President, Vice President, and Secretary of Congregation Council, Pastor, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

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.

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

Our 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.
- Criminal history information.

Our Volunteer Application includes questions regarding:

- Current address.
- Volunteer experience.
- Criminal history information.
- Personal references.

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 **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

2. 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.

3. Conduct interviews with qualified applicants.

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.

Whenever possible, **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** will have an associate to participate in the interview.

4. Contact listed references for new volunteers and ask the applicant's references 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.
5. Contact 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.
6. *Criminal Background Check:* **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** 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 periodically.
7. *Driving Record Review:* **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** will conduct a driving record review periodically on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with transporting minors off of church grounds on church-sponsored trips and activities. Only approved drivers with a valid driver's license are allowed to transport minors on church-sponsored trips and activities.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH:**

1. Will have an adequate number of 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 release minors only to a parent or guardian and utilize sign-in and sign-out sheets.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and should provide information regarding the trip.
5. Will use two paid staff or volunteers when transporting minors in vehicles.
6. Will require that young children be accompanied to the restroom and the paid staff or volunteer wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor.
7. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** property.
8. Will screen all paid staff and volunteers and approve those individuals in advance for any overnight activities.
9. Will designate two "confidential counselors" to whom any minor can go at any time, without special permission, to discuss any problems he or she is having.
10. Under an extenuating circumstance, a paid staff member or approved volunteer may give a one-time approval to a non-screened adult volunteer under the following terms and conditions:
 - a. Supervisory Procedures above are not being met.
 - b. The activity or event is not being held overnight.
 - c. The non-screened adult volunteer must be under the supervision of a paid staff member or approved volunteer at all times.
 - d. The non-screened adult volunteer may not drive the church bus or transport minors off of church grounds.

- e. Previously disqualified applicants are not permitted.
- f. Habitual use of this extenuating circumstance clause is not permitted.
- g. The non-screened adult volunteer must fill out and agree to the terms of the One-Time Supervised Volunteer Form.

Behavioral Guidelines for Religious Organization Paid Staff and Volunteers

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. To the extent possible, **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.
3. Whenever possible, at least two unrelated paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when minors are present. Doors will be left fully open if one adult needs to leave the room temporarily and during arrival to the class or event before both adults 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
8. 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 **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** for handling.
9. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited during church-sponsored events with minors.

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.

Sexual Offender at WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH

WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to

remain or become a member of the congregation, but they must adhere to specific guidelines. However, first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children are present. Ask the probation/parole officer to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions do not prohibit offender participation, the following additional four requirements must be implemented and remain in force at all times involving any known sexual offender:

1. The convicted sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way.
2. The convicted sexual offender can only participate in a predetermined service each week.
3. The convicted sexual offender must report in and be assigned to an escort who will accompany him or her at all times.
4. The congregation needs to be made aware that a convicted sex offender is attending. However, the name does not need to be disclosed.

Response to Emotional, Physical, and Sexual Abuse

WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of emotional, physical, and sexual 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 abuse and those who have been accused of such abuse.

When an allegation is made involving emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The Executive Committee of Congregation Council will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If any member of the Executive Committee or his/her Family Member is involved in the allegation or the Executive Committee feels that there is a conflict of interest, they will be prohibited from participating in the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws.
2. Report the matter to WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH's insurance carrier.
3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
5. At least two members of the Executive Committee of WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the Congregation Council of WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
6. Two members of the Executive Committee of WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
7. Two members of the Executive Committee of WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH 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, two members of the Executive Committee of WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal
9. Two members of the Executive Committee of WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH (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 WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH.
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 WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH's attorney.

Child and Youth Safety 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. **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** 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 **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH** or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of the **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH's** Child and Youth Safety 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 **WITTENBERG LUTHERAN CHURCH**.

Print Name

Signature

Date