

Farmington Lutheran Church (FLC)

Policy for the Safeguarding of Children & Youth

Purpose: The physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of our children is an important concern at Farmington Lutheran and will be protected. FLC has a zero tolerance for sexual or physical misconduct and will aggressively pursue investigation of reports of misconduct. With this in mind, the following rules are to be followed to safeguard all children and youth participating in any activity at FLC.

Background Checks

All staff, nursery attendants, volunteer teachers, assistants, mentors, children and youth music leaders, and persons providing transportation for any children or youth FLC activities, and are 18 years of age or older, will agree to a criminal background check. Background checks, by an outside vendor chosen by FLC, are run every three years for all current staff and volunteers. An Acknowledgment and Authorization for Background Check form is submitted and stored electronically. Employee results are maintained by the Senior Pastor or designee, and volunteer results are maintained by the office administrator. Successful background check results must be available prior to any interaction with children/youth in any of the FLC programs/activities. Volunteers or paid staff with any kind of convicted criminal behavior are disqualified from any interaction with children or youth or being employed at FLC. Criminal behavior includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following: Child molestation, Incest, Rape, Assaults involving minors, Physical abuse of a child or adult, Child pornography, and/or a Criminal record involving injury to a person of any age.

Nursery Attendants

The minimum age for a nursery attendant is 18 years of age. A youth helper who is at least 16 years of age may be utilized only if supervised by a nursery attendant. The top half of the hallway door to the nursery will remain open at all times. The interior half door/gate and bottom half of the hallway doors will be closed, but not locked, to prevent children from leaving the nursery room unobserved. A check-in list is utilized to record name of the child(ren), parent or guardian name(s) and phone number(s), record of time in and time out, and name of attendant(s) or helper(s). Only the parent or guardian who checked in a child will be allowed to check out a child, unless written permission is given.

Parent/Adult Pickup

Third grade children and younger must be picked up by a parent or adult. Fourth and fifth grade children may be picked up by a parent, adult, or an older sibling. The person picking up the child must come into the space and pick up the child in view of the teacher. Sixth grade and older students are allowed to be picked up outside of the church building.

Requests from parents or guardians for any individuals who are prohibited from picking up a child/youth must be made in writing to the appropriate staff member and kept on file with the Director of the participant's program.

Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries

Staff and volunteers who interact with children and youth must set good examples of appropriate ways to relate to others, whether in person or with written or electronic communications. Adult workers must be attentive to appropriate dress codes, appropriate use of language and appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement. A good rule of thumb is to never initiate a hug and to always be the one to end the hug. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.

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.

One-on-One Meetings/Classrooms/Offices

In situations that necessitate a mentor, teacher, or leader to have a personal conversation with a child or youth, the meeting will be held in view of other adults, never in an isolated area. All staff practice open door policies when meeting with any children or youth in their offices. If a pastor or program director determines a closed-door meeting is required due to confidentiality issues, another adult must be in the building and be aware of the meeting taking place.

All classrooms and offices have windows in the doors. If teachers teach with the classroom door closed, the window on the door must not be covered.

Supervision of Activities

At a minimum, there will be two non-related adults (at least one 18 or older and one 21 or over) supervising all on or off-site church related activities for children or youth. "Youth helpers" are defined as youths under the age of 18 and who have successfully been trained on this policy. FLC encourages youth helpers, but if they are conducting FLC sponsored activities, at least one adult (over the age of 21) must be assigned to supervisor youth helper(s). Any overnight activity, on or off-site, will be supervised by a minimum of two non-related adults (both at least 21 years old) and, if a co-ed activity, both a male and female supervisor will be present. Parental permission is also required for any child or youth to participate in an overnight activity or an FLC sponsored activity not held on the church premises. Electronically registering a student for any FLC program/event implies parental permission.

Transportation

FLC will use drivers with a current valid driver's license that are 21 years old or older when transporting children or youth. All drivers and passengers must be wearing a seat belt whenever the vehicle is moving. The seating capacity of the vehicle may never be exceeded. Drivers are not allowed to transport only one child.

All drivers must agree to a distracted driving policy which includes only hands-free cell phone usage that is pertinent to the event. Volunteers will not be allowed to drive their own or borrowed vehicles unless those vehicles are insured and carry adequate limits of liability, uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage. If driver is not able to verify valid license and/or insurance coverage, they will not be allowed to transport child or youth for any FLC event. (See Appendix A-Safe Driving Affidavit). This signed affidavit is to be completed at least once per year and kept on file with the Office Administrator for a minimum of one year.

Operating 12-15 Passenger Vans

In addition to the above requirements for drivers, the following rules must be followed for operating 12-15 passenger vans:

A background check that includes a Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) will be obtained from all drivers planning to operate a 12-15 passenger van to assess their driving record. MVR must be free of any serious driving citations.

To prevent fatigue, you should have at least two drivers in each van at all times. Limit each driver to eight hours of driving per 24-hour period, and take frequent breaks. The second adult should be acting as a supervisor so the driver is not distracted by any passengers in the van. Drivers will always obey the posted speed limits.

Do not rent 12-15 passenger vans manufactured before 2004. Vehicles produced before 2004 likely do not have crash prevention technology such as Electronic Stability Control (ESC), anti-lock brakes and automatic tire pressure monitoring systems. Perform an inspection of the vehicle prior to departing. In particular, you should pay attention to the tires: Many 12-15 passenger van rollovers occur because of a tire blowout. Know the manufacturer's recommended tire pressure (you can find it in the owner's manual, on the tire wall and inside the driver's side door) and make sure the tires are neither under- nor overinflated.

Always get out and check behind the vehicle before backing up. Whenever possible, back to the left (driver's side) for better visibility, and avoid backing into traffic. Use both outside mirrors and a spotter to assist you, and use four-way flashers to alert nearby vehicles of your presence. Be overly cautious—70 percent of van crashes involve backing into a stationary object.

Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs, and Weapons

Weapons or illegal drugs are never permitted in the building or on FLC grounds. Police will be contacted. Smoking is not permitted on FLC property. With the exception of communion wine, alcohol is not permitted in the building, unless approved by the church council for a specific event.

Incident Reporting

Should any child or youth be injured on or off church premises while participating in an FLC sanctioned activity, the parent or guardian will be immediately notified. An Incident Report Form will be completed by the person who witnessed the accident and/or received the report of injury. Completed forms are reviewed by and kept on file with the appropriate director of the ministries program involved in the incident. (See Appendix B-Incident Report). Should a child or youth be the subject of a possible child abuse incident, the parent or guardian will be immediately notified. An Incident Report Form will be completed by the person who received the report and kept on file with the Senior Pastor or designee. All Incident Reports are retained for 5 years and shredded upon disposal.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct as defined for this policy means any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different genders. Examples of sexual misconduct include sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, and contact of a sexual nature without consent. For purposes of this policy, consent is a freely and affirmatively communicated willingness to participate in particular sexual activity or behavior, expressed either by words or clear, unambiguous actions. Regardless of expressed willingness, consent cannot be given by a minor to an adult, between persons where there is a power differential, or where a person is incapable of making an informed judgment because of mental incapacity. As such, any alleged or observed incidents of sexual misconduct with a minor will be investigated as child abuse.

Child Abuse Reporting

State law mandates that abuse or suspected abuse (misconduct) be reported by certain professionals to law enforcement and/or the Department of Human Services. Consistent with the intent of the law, whenever child abuse is suspected, a pastor, staff, or member of the church council must be immediately informed. It is not necessary that the person making the report have proof that abuse has occurred prior to reporting, only that it is suspected. State law provides legal protection for mandated reporters.

Minnesota requires allegations of abuse against a minor to be reported immediately to the county or tribal social service agency where the child lives, regardless of confidentiality issues:

Dakota County: If you know or suspect that a child is in immediate danger, call 911. To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call 952-891-7459; after working hours and on weekends call the Dakota County Crisis Response Unit at 952-891-7171.

Anyone who knows or suspects that a rostered minister or deacon may have been involved in sexual misconduct is also directed to report that knowledge or suspicion to the ELCA bishop or an assistant to the bishop. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the bishop and assistants are posted at [How to Report Misconduct - Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA \(spas-elca.org\)](https://www.spas-elca.org/How-to-Report-Misconduct)

All information received regarding a report, including the name of the complainant, must be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. Pastors, staff, or council members are acting on behalf of the Congregation, and any information they are given must be shared only with individuals responsible for or assisting with appropriate follow-up, including the synod.

Training

Prior to the start of the fall programming year, as a group, the pastors and all other staff will annually review FLC's *Policy for the Safeguarding of Children and Youth*. Any recommendations for changes will be brought to the Congregational Council for consideration. The currently approved policy will be presented annually by the Director of Children and Family Ministries, the Director of Youth and Families Ministry and the Director of Music Ministries to all volunteers in the children's and youth programs. Volunteers who join any activity or program later in the program year will be given the policy for review prior to volunteering. The supervisor of a new employee will present the policy as part of the on-boarding orientation of said employee.

Any staff not in attendance at the annual staff meeting where this policy is reviewed will be given the policy to review and sign an *Acknowledgement of Receipt of Policy for Safeguarding Children and Youth* of FLC (See Appendix C), which is then kept in their employee file. All program volunteers are required to sign an *Acknowledgement of Receipt of Policy for Safeguarding Children and Youth* of FLC, or alternatively, a sign-in attendance sheet may be used for the training session where the policy is presented to volunteers.

Updated September 11, 2018. Approved by church council.

Updated April 2022, Approved by Church Council May 10, 2022

Farmington Lutheran Church

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APPENDIX A

Safe Driving Affidavit

I, (Print Name) _____ hereby acknowledge, by signing this form, that I have reviewed and agree to abide by the transportation rules outlined in Farmington Lutheran Church's Policy for the Safeguarding of Children and Youth.

Phone # _____

Check boxes that apply:

My Driver's License is valid.

The vehicle I am driving is currently insured for liability insurance and includes coverage for uninsured and underinsured drivers.

A background check that includes a motor vehicle report has been successfully completed and approved. (Applicable for any driver operating a 12-15-passenger vehicle only).

Signature _____ Date _____

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APPENDIX B

Incident Report

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Name of People Involved in Incident: _____

Name of Parent or Guardian notified, if applicable: _____

Name of person(s) who witnessed the incident, if any:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Describe Incident: _____

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS FREELY PROVIDED AND IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Name of Person Completing this Report Date

Name of person Receiving this Report (may be the same as above) Date

I have reported or intend to report this incident to criminal authorities.

Report is on file at FLC with whom: _____ Date: _____

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APPENDIX C

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Policy for Safeguarding Children and Youth of FLC

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 for paid staff. FLC reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

By signing this document, I am stating that I have received, read and understand the FLC Policy for Safeguarding Children and Youth. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. If an incidence of child abuse or criminal activity is proved, I understand my role as volunteer and/or paid staff member will be terminated. I understand that these policies are the property of FLC.

Print Name

Signature

Date