

**St. Paul Lutheran Church**  
**Hamburg, Michigan**  
**CHILD, YOUTH, AND WORKER PROTECTION POLICY**

St. Paul desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity or ministry. Each year children in our country are victimized by individuals they know and trust. The church is not immune to the potential for such abuse or neglect of children, either by its members, by those in leadership positions, or by anyone involved in church-related activities. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across every racial, social, economic, and religious boundary. This *Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy* reflects St. Paul’s commitment to protect children from harm and provide adult volunteers guidelines which also protect their reputations. The policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of St. Paul.

St. Paul will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about children’s safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy.

### *APPROPRIATE TOUCH*

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“Good touch” is important to each of us. Children do not grow and thrive without the good touch of others. Touch was important to Jesus as He healed people and comforted them. Our Christian tradition shares love with each other through hugs, placing an arm around another’s shoulder or squeezing a hand to say, “You are loved.”

It is imperative that the Christian community not lose the importance of “good touch.” We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. To a child who is upset, a warm hug and kind words can be most comforting. In the midst of our caution, let us not forget that good touch is just that – *good!*

### *DEFINITIONS*

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In this policy the following definitions will apply:

1. **Child:** any person under the age of 18
2. **Person with Special Needs:** any adult or child requiring direct adult supervision as a result of mental or physical limitations
3. **Adult:** any person age 18 or over

4. **Child abuse and neglect:** physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect of a child by an adult or adolescent caregiver responsible for the child's welfare
5. Pastoral Staff: Pastor, Director of Christian Education, Directory of Family Ministry
6. **Physical abuse:** maltreatment which results in physical injury, including, but not limited to bruises, cuts, welts, fractures, and internal injuries
7. **Emotional abuse:** maltreatment, including but not limited to, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on child's performance, and excessive isolation from normal social activities
8. **Sexual abuse:** maltreatment which consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including, but not limited to, physical contact (fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, and voyeurism)
9. **Neglect:** failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision
10. **Compensated workers:** hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employees who work with children at any church-sponsored activity
11. **Volunteer workers:** any non-compensated individuals who work with children at any church-sponsored activity
12. **Caregiver:** any compensated or volunteer worker, seventh grade or older

## *SCREENING FOR VOLUNTEER AND COMPENSATED WORKERS*

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The following procedures reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children who participate in church-sponsored activities. These procedures also provide protection, supervision, and guidance for all caregivers.

1. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete the following procedures before participating in any church-sponsored children's activities:
  - a. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete a *St. Paul Child, Youth, and Worker Agreement* and *Volunteer Ministries Application* forms. References will be checked.
  - b. An interview may be conducted by the Pastor or Director of Christian Education and/or Director of Family Ministry. We also recommend that the coordinator for the specific ministry be involved in the interview.

- c. All persons working with children should attend orientation/training activities appropriate to the level of the volunteer or compensated worker.
2. Applicants who have direct supervisory responsibilities must sign a written acknowledgement stating that they have received and reviewed a copy of the *St. Paul Child, Youth, and Worker Agreement* and *Volunteer Ministries Application* forms.
3. All volunteer and compensated workers shall be screened by using a background check for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings.
4. Any adult member of the congregation, volunteer, or compensated worker who has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult shall not have unsupervised contact with children or persons with special needs in any church-sponsored activity or program.

Those who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse can be forgiven for, and cleansed of, their sin. However, sin does have consequences, and such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry at St. Paul.

5. The application and the results of any screening shall be kept confidential by authorized church staff.

## *GENERAL POLICIES FOR SUPERVISION OF CAREGIVERS*

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### **Children's Ministries (Birth – Sixth Grade)**

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults working together with children. In a Bible study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one adult caregiver provided there are other adults present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.
3. The windows of classroom doors shall remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
4. Children are to be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, two adults or caregivers should be present.
5. Children younger than 4<sup>th</sup> grade shall be released to parents or guardians at the classroom door. Persons other than the child's parents or guardians must be authorized in writing in advance to pick up the child.
6. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately.

7. The Pastor and/or Director of Christian Education and/or Director of Family Ministry must approve any activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian written permission shall be obtained, and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.
8. Organized events on or off site (St. Paul) shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.

### **Youth Ministries (Seventh Grade – Twelfth Grade)**

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults working together with children. In a Bible study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one adult caregiver provided there are other adults present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.
3. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established.
4. The Pastor and/or Director of Christian Education and/or Director of Family Ministry must approve any activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian written permission shall be obtained, and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.
5. Organized events on or off site (St. Paul) shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.
6. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adult caregivers and that the general guidelines for supervision of caregivers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. In this case the door must be left open or the window of the door shall remain uncovered.
7. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory staff person.
8. Normally, the housing cost of the event is based on QUAD (4 to a room) housing. AT NO TIME, should an adult share the same bed with a youth who is not his/her own child. Adults and youth should not share a room, unless there are two adults in the room. In the case of attending summer camp, youth may stay in a cabin with only one summer camp counselor and other campers, provided this is the policy of the camp.

## *REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT*

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St. Paul has determined that it is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper legal authorities within 24 hours of it being discovered.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern.

Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer, or both. Reporting probable cause of child abuse or neglect has the potential for helping individuals to receive assistance for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.

What is probable cause? Probable cause means that the available facts, when viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances, would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. A report based on probable cause does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of the child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, St. Paul has adopted the following guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:

1. Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately do the following:
  - a. Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured.
  - b. Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children.
2. It is required to report the suspected abuse or neglect immediately to a member of the pastoral staff. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident only with these individuals.
3. The pastoral staff shall report the incident to the proper legal authorities and share a copy of the report with the person who reported the incident.  
Define pastoral staff in "Definitions" section.

## *RESPONSE OF ST. PAUL*

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St. Paul's primary functions in responding to allegations of child abuse or neglect are:

1. to ensure the safety and protection of persons who have been or may be harmed,
2. to seek healing by providing pastoral care and other needed assistance to all who are affected,
3. and, to the extent possible, to respect the privacy and rights of the parties involved and the confidentiality of communications.

If St. Paul receives an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the Pastor will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, St. Paul will assume such allegations are made in good faith. Persons making such allegations should have no doubt that St. Paul takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

St. Paul personnel must refrain from identifying the alleged victims, the accused, or the persons making the allegations to anyone other than the proper authorities during an investigation. If the media or other parties contact a church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the Pastor. Only the Pastor or his designee shall make comments about the allegation.

## *RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ST. PAUL PASTORAL STAFF*

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In accordance with the church's position that child abuse and neglect shall not be tolerated, the pastoral staff shall do the following:

1. Secure the safety of the child or person with special needs.
2. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
3. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
4. Contact the Department of Human Services (855-444-3911) immediately and follow the guidance of the Department of Human Services.
5. Report the incident immediately to the church insurance company and attorney.
6. Notify the parents or guardians. If a member of the family is the abuser and the church worker has discovered the situation, parents or guardians are not to be notified until the Department of Human Services has investigated.
7. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his/her duties and treated with dignity and support until the investigation is finished.
8. If necessary and after contacting an attorney, the text of a prepared statement shall be used to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Care must be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

Unless it is necessary for purposes of securing the safety of children or persons with special needs, the accused should not be confronted. Neither should any attempt be made to begin an investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases. While all allegations must be taken seriously, prejudging the situation is inappropriate. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt. Appropriate pastoral resources will be extended to the victims and the accused.