

## OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH Youth and Family Ministry

### POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM ABUSE

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the Youth and Family Ministry of Our Savior's Lutheran Church ("YFM"). YFM includes all activities under the leadership of the Youth and Family Ministry Committee including: high school, middle school, and upper elementary youth groups and their activities and outings. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow YFM to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by YFM to help YFM create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All YFM Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code and within the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to YFM.

- YFM Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- YFM Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- YFM Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in these Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- YFM Personnel agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- In the event that YFM Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, YFM Personnel agree to immediately report their observations.
- YFM Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders in accordance with these policies.
- YFM Personnel understand that OSLC will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

#### **GENERAL DEFINITIONS**

A. "YFM PERSONNEL" For the purposes of this policy, YFM Personnel means all clergy whether stipendiary, non-stipendiary, or otherwise who are engaged in ministry to YFM, paid youth ministry staff and all volunteers, including any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so. Volunteers include members of advisory boards and committees.

B. "CHILDREN" and "YOUTH" A "child" is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years. A "youth" is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school.

C. TYPES OF ABUSE

1. Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
2. Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth.
3. Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
5. Neglect is the failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
6. Economic exploitation is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.

**SAFEGUARDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

A. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

1. YFM Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.
2. YFM Personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise volunteers under the age of 18.
3. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, YFM Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
4. At least two YFM Personnel must supervise activities. When both boys and girls are participating, it is recommended that male and female adults be present.

B. GENERAL CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. All YFM Personnel who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the OSLC Youth and Family Ministry Guidelines for Appropriate Affection.
2. No person will be allowed to volunteer until the person has been known to the clergy and congregation for at least six months.

3. Programs for infants and children under six (6) years old will have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or legal guardians or those designated by them.
4. YFM Personnel are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.
5. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before YFM Personnel transport children and youth for a church sponsored activity or for any purpose on more than an occasional basis.
6. YFM Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. YFM Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
7. One-to-one counseling with children or youth will be done in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
8. YFM Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
9. YFM Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
10. YFM Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
11. YFM Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
12. YFM Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
13. YFM Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds or sleeping bags with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the bed or sleeping bag.
14. YFM Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.
15. YFM Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
16. YFM Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

## C. GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION

1. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some POSITIVE and APPROPRIATE forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate.

2. The following forms of affection are considered INAPPROPRIATE with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over four years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Inappropriate or suggestive comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth in a secretive manner or outside of a recognized celebration (ex. Baptism, confirmation, etc.)
- Private meals with individual children or youth.

## **RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS**

### **A. REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS OR POLICY VIOLATIONS WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH**

1. When YFM Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION, or which may violate any provision of these Policies the for Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, they must immediately report their observations. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using staff or volunteers without the required screening.
2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:
  - a. A telephone call or meeting with the immediate supervisor of the person,
  - b. A telephone call or meeting with the pastor, if the person is not the pastor; or
  - c. A telephone call or meeting with the synod office and Bishop of the Pacifica Synod if the person is the pastor.
3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

### **B. REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF CHILDREN OR YOUTH**

1. All YFM Personnel are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the pastor of OSLC so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims. NOTE: clergy and paid youth ministry staff are mandatory reporters in the state of California.
2. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. Every state provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
4. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve YFM Personnel may be reported to the pastor of OSLC by telephone call, meeting or fax. They may also be reported directly to the Bishop of Pacifica Synod in the same manner.

OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Youth and Family Ministry

POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM ABUSE

I have read and understand the Policies for the Protection of Children and youth from Abuse and agree to follow them in my conduct as a volunteer, staff person, or clergy in all activities or events associated with Youth and Family Ministry at Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

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Print Name

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Signature

Date

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Home Phone

Cell Phone

---

Mailing Address

City

State

Zip

---

e-mail

Please Return to:

OSLC

Attn: Youth and Family Ministry

200 Avenida San Pablo

San Clemente, CA 92672