

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Reducing the Risk Safety Policy

Holy Cross Lutheran Church (HCLC) is committed to creating and maintaining an environment where our members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free from discrimination, exploitation, harassment, intimidation, or violence of any nature; all of which are specifically prohibited by church policy. We are committed to providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing haven for our youth and children.

The policies and procedures that follow are intended to support this commitment, and apply to all activities which take place within the building and on HCLC property, as well as programs, activities, or events scheduled as part of the ministry of this church which take place elsewhere. Our safety policies and procedures apply to all church attendees, members, volunteers, or employees as well as outside groups using HCLC facilities.

Supervisory Policies and Procedures for adults working with children and youth.

The following policies have been established to protect our youth and the adults who care for them. These policies have been established with the philosophy in mind that there is “safety in numbers.” With these guidelines, it is our hope to prevent the occurrence of abuse from ever happening to our children and youth. We also hope to prevent our adult volunteers and staff from the pain of a false accusation.

1. Participation and Identification

- Adult chaperones and volunteers must have been regularly attending Holy Cross Lutheran Church for a minimum of 3 months.
- Must have a valid government issued photo ID.

2. Screening of Staff and Volunteers

- Any volunteer working with children and youth will be subject to sex offender screening through the state sex offender registry. Anyone previously convicted of, or who admits to having committed acts of physical, emotional or sexual abuse and/or violence against children or youth, will be strictly prohibited from serving our children and youth.
- A basic background check will be conducted for any adult who will be engaged in the care, supervision and/or custody of minors on behalf of HCLC without direct staff supervision. Background checks on employees and volunteers are to be completed before they begin their employment or volunteerism with HCLC. All individuals have the right to read the Background Reports in their name that are received by HCLC.

3. Two Adult Rule

- At least two adult leaders (either volunteer or staff) are to be present during any church sponsored activity for youth and children.
- All children and youth engaged in HCLC activities will be under the care and supervision of two adults (18 years of age or older).
- No teacher, leader, assistant, advisor or any other adult working with our children or youth (other than being alone with his or her own child), will place himself or herself in a compromising situation by being alone with any child or children out of sight of other adult(s). In situations where this is not practical, for example when a mentor meets one-on-one with a Confirmation student, the adult must receive written permission from the child's parent or guardian.
- Every effort will be made to adhere to the “two adult rule”, however, when this is not possible steps will be taken to assure the safety of both children and adults. For example, during children's classes on Sunday

mornings one adult and one or more high school assistant(s) are permissible provided that the Director of Children & Family Ministry (or designated substitute) is present and actively monitoring the classrooms. Likewise, for nursery childcare: one adult and one or more high school assistant(s) are permissible provided the Nursery Coordinator (or designated substitute) is present and actively monitoring the nursery.

- In the event childcare is promised for an adult class or small group and two caregivers are not available, the childcare may still take place if it is within sight and sound of where the adult group is meeting and with the parents' consent.

4. *Classroom Safety*

- In rooms where there is no window on the door, the door must remain open at all times.
- No adult leader should initiate or encourage inappropriate physical or intimate contact with or between youth.
- Adult leaders should have knowledge at all times of the whereabouts of all young people in attendance at church-sponsored events.
- Adult leaders are to be sure that all participants in youth group remain with the group throughout the event. No pairing or otherwise separating from the group to other parts of the building, grounds, or project area is permitted, except with permission of group leaders. Participants must remain in groups of at least three people at all times.
- Children and youth **MUST** remain in their classrooms until a parent or previously agreed-upon designee picks them up. Two adult leaders should remain in the classroom until all children have been picked up. Adult leaders at Youth Group should remain at the church and verify that youth have been picked up by parents or the driver who has been authorized by parents to pick them up.
- Parents are responsible for their child(ren)'s actions and behaviors while in church or at a Holy Cross-sponsored function, except while under the care/supervision of HCLC staff or volunteers.
- Members of HCLC must pay close attention to adults who spend considerable "off duty" time with the same child or children. If such practices are observed, this should be brought to the attention of a HCLC staff member who should consider discussing the matter with the adult and, if necessary, with the child. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship(s) **MUST** be reported to Pastoral Staff, who will make the determination regarding reporting such behavior.
- All employees and volunteers should limit their physical contact with children to appropriate boundaries (shoulders and above, holding hands for a limited time, etc.).

5. *Bathroom Supervision*

- No child will be punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
- Preschool and Kindergarten Children - We encourage parents to have their child use the bathroom just prior to dropping them off for a class or other activity. If a child needs to use the bathroom during a church activity or class time, they should be escorted to the nearest bathroom by a teacher/leader. The teacher or leader should check the bathroom to ensure it's empty before allowing the child into the bathroom and prop the outer bathroom door open while the child uses the facilities. No adult is to stay inside the bathroom with just one child. If a child needs assistance, two adults should be present—when only one adult is available, the adult will leave the door to the bathroom open.
- Elementary and Older Children – If a child needs to use the bathroom during a church activity or class time, they should be directed to the closest bathrooms and an adult designated to monitor their return to the group.
- Parents of infants should check their child's diaper before leaving the nursery, changing it if necessary. Nursery volunteers should not change diapers; a parent/guardian will be contacted to perform diaper changes.

6. Traveling and Overnight Guidelines

- Parental consent is required for all chaperoned activities or programs away from the Church and/or any unsupervised (i.e. - one-on-one activities such as when a mentor works with a Confirmation student) situation. Parents/guardians will be fully informed about programs, activities, leaders, chaperones, dates and times, cost, method of transportation, and purpose of scheduled trip or activity. The appropriate Permission and Medical Release Form will be completed and collected before a child/youth will be allowed to participate in the activity/event. In each event of a field trip or overnight/weekend, the original of this form must be taken with one of the adult leaders.
- A full background check will be conducted for any adult who will be engaged in the care, supervision and/or custody of minors on behalf of HCLC during an overnight activity. A signed Disclosure and Authorization Form for a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check is required.
- The adult to youth ratio for all junior and senior high youth overnights is 1 to 7. If the group is a mixed group of both males and females, there must be both a male and a female adult leader(s).
- When on overnights, males and females are to have separate sleeping areas; this includes adult leaders as well as youth.
- No adult may sleep in the same bed as a child/youth.

Transportation Policy

- Drivers must be 25 – 62 years of age.
- A parental permission slip must be obtained which gives parental consent to allowing his/her child to travel with the adult driver.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times by all occupants.
- Due to the danger of airbags, all children 12 years of age and under must ride in the back seat of the vehicle.
- If an activity requires a carpool of multiple cars traveling from church to the same activity/destination, an adult may not ride alone in a vehicle with a single child/youth with the exception being the adult is a family member of the child (parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc.). There is safety in numbers; therefore, a single adult may travel with a group of children/youth in the same vehicle.
- All drivers of youth must fill out an application for qualified driver form and present proof of insurance coverage. The staff overseeing the activity has responsibility of reviewing and approving every driver for the activity.
- A charged and turned-on cell phone should be in the car at all times for emergency situations. The driver must not use cell phone when driving. (The emergency kit is to have a list of everyone attending and their emergency information).

7. Nursery

- Nursery (Treehouse) caregivers are to be at least 15 years of age.
- Caregiver to child ratio in the HCLC nursery (Treehouse) is 1 caregiver to every 7 children with a minimum of 2 caregivers present at all times.

8. *Evacuation Policy*

- Children will be guided to one of the designated safe locations in the event we need to evacuate the church building during an emergency. Emergency evacuation plans/routes are posted in all rooms, hallways, and at exit doors; the teacher or adult in charge is responsible for implementing the plan, making sure to bring the attendance sheet to account for all children under his/her supervision. It is of utmost importance that the evacuation routes be followed so as not to create congestion in any one area. The staff member (or other adult) in charge, will make the determination of which safe location to use depending on the nature of the emergency and how much distance from the church building is required for safety, and to direct people there. Parents are to meet their children at the safe location; it is very important that parents do not try to reach their children until they are outside, as this would lead to confusion. Also, parents must not take their children from the designated safe location, without notifying the HCLC adult(s) in charge.

9. *Discipline*

- When the disciplining of children to maintain order is required, corporal punishment or threatening harm of any nature is not acceptable. Neither should verbal reprimands be insulting, demeaning or inclusive of destructive criticism.
- Children's leaders, teachers and advisors are encouraged to listen to the child and communicate the expectations of appropriate behavior. If a child fails to respond to these expectations, the supervising staff member responsible for the activity or event will be notified immediately so the particular situation can be discussed with the child's parent/guardian.
- Children who present continual disciplinary problems or continually exhibit disruptive behavior may be asked not to attend church programs until able to comply with behavioral expectations.

10. *Alcoholic Products and Controlled Substances*

- The use of any controlled substance, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in church facilities or at church sponsored events such as a mission trip or retreat is prohibited.

DISCLAIMER: *Parents are to be made aware that these policies only apply to the programmed ministries of HCLC. When calling a neighbor, friend, or acquaintance of HCLC to give a child a ride, parents must be sure that they trust the individual they ask for assistance.*

Reporting

Volunteers who suspect abuse should report it immediately to a pastor or the staff member who is supervising the ministry where the allegation occurred. A volunteer may also report suspicion to the proper authorities. All reports will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Your report will be documented in writing. Proper authorities will be notified immediately so that an investigation may begin.

When abuse is suspected

Discrete and confidential reporting of suspected abuse is critical to abuse prevention. If you suspect an incidence of abuse, your care in faithful reporting will help to maintain and uphold the safety of our children and youth.

Basis for making a report: Any violation of church policies

If at any time, you observe a staff member or volunteer violating the “Reducing the Risk” policies, and procedures of HCLC, you have the basis for bringing the matter to the attention of any one of the appropriate HCLC staff or pastors.

Who can report abuse?

South Dakota law requires certain professionals to report child abuse or neglect. It also permits others, who are not mandated, to report. Mandated reporters are to report orally and immediately to the state’s attorney, Department of Social Services or law enforcement. The minimal standard for a report to be made is a reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring.

Individuals who participate in good faith in the reporting of child abuse and neglect are immune from liability. Individuals may report abuse anonymously to either the Department of Social Services or to law enforcement agencies. You can report anonymously and not give your name, but if you are a “mandatory reporter” you should always give your name to protect yourself. Please be aware that there are several circumstances that can occur where a judge may release your name.

Mutual Accountability – Our obligation to one another

Called to be a community of care and concern, it is our mutual obligation to speak the truth in love when questionable behavior is observed. If you see a volunteer or staff member displaying questionable behavior, (i.e. giving inappropriate backrubs, or making suggestive comments and jokes) it is your responsibility to advise him or her as to the consequences of his/her actions. Such care and concern for your neighbor can prevent an accusation or instance of abuse from occurring.

APPENDIX A

South Dakota State Law—Abuse Defined *SD Law 26—8A—2*

A. What constitutes child abuse?

The South Dakota state law states “the existence of any one of several conditions constitutes abuse or neglect, so long as that ultimate finding is supported by clear and convincing evidence.

An ‘abused or neglected child’ is one:

1. Whose parent, guardian, or custodian has abandoned the child or has subjected the child to mistreatment or abuse.
2. Who lacks proper parental care through the actions or omissions of child’s parent, guardian, or custodian. Whose environment is injurious to the child’s welfare.
3. Whose parent, guardian, or custodian fails or refuses to provide proper or necessary subsistence, supervision, education, medical care, or any other care necessary for child’s health, guidance, or well-being.
4. Who is homeless, without proper care, or not domiciled with the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian through no fault of the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian.
5. Who is threatened with substantial harm.
6. Who has sustained emotional harm or mental injury as indicated by an injury to the child’s intellectual or psychological capacity evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment to the child’s ability to function within the child’s normal range of performance and behavior, with due regard to the child’s culture.
7. Who is subjected to sexual abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual exploitation by the child’s parent, guardian, custodian, or any other person responsible for the child’s care.
8. Who was subject to prenatal exposure to abusive use of alcohol or any controlled drug or substance not lawfully prescribed by a practitioner.

***NOTE: The term “custodian” refers to anyone who is a caretaker of a minor. It includes those in the roles of camp counselor, Sunday School teacher, nursery care provider, youth mentor, and congregation.*

Chapter 26-8A *Protection of children from abuse or neglect*

26-8A-14. Immunity from liability. Any person or party participating in good faith in the making of a report or the submitting of copies of medical examination, treatment or hospitalization records pursuant to 26-8A-3 to 26-8A-8, inclusive or pursuant to any other provisions of this chapter, is immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed, and has the same immunity for participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from the report. Immunity also extends in the same manner to persons requesting the taking of photographs and X rays pursuant to 26-8A-16, to persons taking the photographs and X rays, to child protection teams established by the secretary of social services, to public officials or employees involved in the investigation and treatment of child abuse or neglect or making a temporary placement of the child pursuant to this chapter, or to any person who in good faith cooperates with a child protection team or the department of social services in investigation, placement or a treatment plan. The provisions of this section or any other section granting or allowing the grant of immunity do not extend to any person alleged to have committed an act or acts of child abuse or neglect.

26-8A-2. Abused or neglected child defined.

26-8A-3. Persons required to report child abuse or neglected child — Intentional failure as misdemeanor.

Any physician, dentist, doctor of osteopathy, chiropractor, optometrist, mental health professional or counselor, podiatrist, psychologist, religious healing practitioner, social worker, hospital intern or resident, parole or court services officer, law enforcement officer, teacher, school counselor, school official, nurse, licensed or registered child welfare provider, employee or volunteer of a domestic abuse shelter, chemical dependency counselor, coroner, or any safety-sensitive position as defined in subdivision 23-3-64 (2), who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child under the age of eighteen has been abused or neglected as defined in 26-8A-2 shall report that information in accordance with 26-8A-6, 26-8A-7 and 26-8A-8. Any person who intentionally fails to make the required report is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. Any person who knows or has reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected as defined in 26-8A-2 may report that information as provided in 26-8A-8.

APPENDIX B

Signs of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators

Unexplained Bruises and welts

- On face, lips, mouth
- In various stages of healing
- Reflecting shape of article used to inflict; electric cord or belt buckle
- On several different surface areas; regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation
- On torso, back, buttocks, thighs
- Clustered, forming regular pattern

Unexplained Burns

- Cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks
- Immersion burns; sock-like, glove-like, doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia, patterned like electric burner, iron
- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso

Unexplained Fractures

- To skull, nose, facial structure in various stages of healing
- Multiple or spiral fractures

Unexplained Lacerations or Abrasions

- To mouth, lips, gums, eyes
- To external genitalia

Behavioral Indicators

- Wary of adult contacts
- Apprehensive when other children cry
- Frightened of parents
- Afraid to go home
- Reports injury by parents
- Behavioral extremes; aggressiveness or withdrawal

Physical Neglect

Physical Indicators

- Consistent hunger
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate dress
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities for long periods
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs; abandonment

Behavioral Indicators (physical neglect)

- Begging, stealing food
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Delinquency; thefts
- States there is no caretaker
- Extended stays at school; early arrival and late departure
- Constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class

Sexual Abuse

Physical indicators

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Venereal disease; especially in pre-teens
- Pregnancy
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas

Behavioral indicators

- Poor peer relationships
- Delinquent or run away behavior
- Reports sexual assault by caretaker
- Unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education class
- Withdrawal, fantasy or bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge

Emotional Abuse

Physical indicators

- Speech disorders
- Failure to thrive
- Lags in physical development

Behavioral indicators

- Habit disorders; sucking, biting, rocking
- Conduct disorders; anti-social, destructive
- Neurotic traits; sleep disorders, inhibited play
- Attempted suicide
- Psychoneurotic reactions; hysteria obsession, compulsion, phobias, hypochondria
- Behavior extremes; compliant, passive or aggressive, demanding
- Overly adaptive behavior; inappropriately adult or inappropriately infant
- Developmental lags; mental, emotional

APPENDIX C

Reducing the Risk Training Procedures

1. Annual Training of Policy for Holy Cross Staff and Council.

Every February the HCLC staff and council will review the policies outlined in the “Reducing the Risk” Handbook. As custodians of children and youth, the council and staff, will be reminded of their moral and legal obligations of ensuring the safety of our youth.

2. Mandatory training for Volunteers

All volunteers working with children and adults will need to attend a training event in which the policies and procedures regarding child abuse prevention are clearly communicated. In most cases, such training events should take place in a group setting (such as a Sunday School teacher training or a Vacation Bible School training). When no group is available a video training resource will be made available for volunteers to receive such training.

3. Annual Review and Evaluation of Program Effectiveness Training for staff, council and volunteers will include reminders of:

- mandatory reporter laws
- definitions of child abuse
- what constitutes inappropriate conduct
- how to respond to inappropriate conduct
- reporting procedures

At the appointed time for annual training, the staff and council will not only review the “*Reducing the Risk*” policies, but also evaluate their effectiveness. (February of each year).

Pertinent questions to be answered will be:

- a. Have volunteers/staff been trained regarding these policies?*
- b. Are volunteers/staff following the required policies and guidelines?*
- c. What obstacles exist in complying with these policies?*
- d. Do sufficient materials exist for training and information?*
- e. Are the policies printed and available?*
- f. Are there changes that need to be made in the existing policies?*

5. Implementation

Persons responsible for coordinating the training of abuse prevention include those persons in the following roles:

- Lead & Associate Pastor(s)
- Director of Children & Family Ministries
- Director of Youth Ministries
- Preschool Director

***Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Reducing the Risk Safety Policy***

Please return this form to the church office.

I have completed the training and have read and understand the criteria for appropriate behavior, as outlined in the Holy Cross Lutheran Church's Child and Youth Protection Policy, *Reducing the Risk*.

This includes the policy, definition and reporting procedures.

Full Name (Printed) _____

Previous Names _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

County _____

Signature _____

Date _____