

## **STAFF SCREENING AND BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY**

Grace Lutheran Church will conduct mandatory screening and background checks on its paid and volunteer staff according to the level of need and association with children, youth or vulnerable adults and/or condition of employment. Any person who does not comply with the staff screening and background check policy by providing requested information or otherwise interferes with the staff screening and background check process will automatically be disqualified from serving in the paid or voluntary position.

All employees and volunteers will be asked if they have ever been accused of, participated in, or been convicted of sexual misconduct.

All employees, and those volunteers involved with any activity involving a minor (under age 18) must be required to sign a release form kept on file allowing Grace to request a criminal background check.

Volunteers must be involved with Grace Lutheran Church for at least six months before they are allowed to serve in any position involving contact with minors.

### **A - DEFINITIONS:**

#### Church Staff:

1. All clergy engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All non-clergy paid staff.
3. Those who contract their services to the church.
4. Volunteers performing the tasks of a defined church position and any person who offers a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service.

Child: A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.

Youth: 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.

Vulnerable Adult: A vulnerable adult is defined as an individual who is 18 years or older and is a resident or inpatient of a healthcare facility or receives services from a licensed home care provider or a person or organization that provides personal care assistance under the state's medical assistance program, or is an individual who lives at home or in a facility and is unable or unlikely to report maltreatment of him or herself because of a physical or mental infirmity or other physical, mental or emotional dysfunction that impairs a person's ability to provide adequately for his or her own care without assistance.

Regularly work with or around children or youth: The following are included in the definition of church personnel who regularly work with or around children or youth.

1. All clergy who are engaged in ministry or service to Grace.
2. Adults who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs or activities more than three times a year.
3. Adults who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle more than three times in a year as part of a church activity.
4. Adults who work or assist in the nursery more than four times a year or if they are the only person over 21 present at any time.
5. Adults that participate in overnight activities with children or youth (e.g. at overnight camps, youth mission trips or retreats.) such as Sunday and vacation Bible School teacher, lay youth minister, volunteer youth director or children or youth choir director.

Occasionally work with or around children or youth: The following are included in the definition of church personnel who occasionally work with or around children or youth.

1. Adults who supervise or assist supervising teaching children or youth in ministries, programs or activities no more than three times in a year or for a program or activity during a year that lasts less than a month. (i.e. assisting with Christmas program or teaching one unit of Sunday School for one month).
2. Adults who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle no more than three times a year as part of a church activity.
3. Adults who assist or work in the nursery four or fewer times a year.

Regularly work with vulnerable adults: (Currently not part of Grace's mission). The following are included in the definition of church personnel who regularly work with vulnerable adults.

1. Adults who provide transportation to vulnerable adults without other adults in attendance more than three times a year as part of a church activity.
2. Adults who provide visitation more than three times a year to vulnerable adults in their home or care facility with other adults in attendance.

Occasionally work with vulnerable adults: (Currently not part of Grace's mission). The following are included in the definition of church personnel who occasionally work with vulnerable adults.

1. Adults who provide transportation to vulnerable adults without other adults in attendance three times a year or less as part of a church activity.
2. Adults who provide visitation three times a year or less to vulnerable adults in their home or care facility without other adults in attendance.

## B - INITIAL BACKGROUND CHECK:

All background checks shall be completed prior to service of the individual.

1. All clergy background checks are performed in accordance with Synod guidelines.
2. All non-clergy paid staff and volunteers performing the tasks of a defined church position are required to and will be screened and selected utilizing at least the following as applicable:
  - a. Verify name, address and previous address.
  - b. Verify previous employers.
  - c. Individual interview with the applicant.
  - d. A standard application completed by the applicant.
  - e. A signed authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks.
  - f. Verify employment eligibility and identity in order to complete the INS Form 1-9 as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act when applicable.
  - g. Reference checks from persons outside the congregation who know the applicant.
  - h. A criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven years is recommended.
3. All church personnel who regularly work with or around children or youth will be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
  - a. A signed authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks (Appendix A).
  - b. Review and acceptance of the Grace Lutheran Church's Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults (Appendix B).
  - c. Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven years.
  - d. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven years.
  - e. Child abuse and neglect registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven years.
  - f. Individual interview with the applicant.
  - g. Driving or motor vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth.
4. All church personnel who occasionally work with or around children or youth will be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
  - a. Review and acceptance of Grace Lutheran Church's Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults (Appendix B.).

- b. Individual interview with the applicant.
5. All church personnel who regularly work with vulnerable adults will be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
    - a. A signed authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks (Appendix A).
    - b. Review and acceptance of Grace Lutheran Church's Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults (Appendix B).
    - c. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven years.
    - d. Driving or motor vehicle records check if he person will be transporting vulnerable adults.
    - e. Individual interview with the applicant.
  6. All church personnel who occasionally work with or around vulnerable adults will be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
    - a. Review and acceptance of Grace Lutheran Church's Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults (Appendix B).
    - b. Individual interview with the applicant.

#### C - DISPOSITION OF CONDUCTED BACKGROUND CHECK:

1. All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not the person is appropriate to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults as applies to the position.
2. Volunteers and applicants will have the right to know what a background report contained and to dispute inaccurate items with the source.
3. A volunteer or applicant will be told if information in his/her file has been used against him/her.
4. If the volunteer or applicant does have a criminal conviction and does not feel it would interfere with responsibilities, he/she may talk to the pastor. In making the decision, the pastor will consider such facts as the type of crime and how it relates to the position, the surrounding circumstances, the time since the conviction, the applicant or volunteer's history of the behavior since and the person's openness and honesty. A past conviction does not automatically exclude service as a volunteer or paid staff.
5. The cost of the background check, if required, will be paid by Grace Lutheran Church.
6. Church personnel who regularly work with or around children, youth or vulnerable adults must have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept, locked and secure.

D - BACKGROUND CHECK FOLLOW-UP:

1. Criminal record checks will be conducted every five (5) years for church personnel who regularly work with or around children, youth or vulnerable adults.
2. Sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every five (5) years for church personnel who regularly work with or around children, youth or vulnerable adults.
3. Child Abuse and Neglect registry checks will be conducted every five (5) years for church personnel who regularly work with or around children or youth.

E - POLICY OWNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

1. The Pastor, the Education Committee and the Youth and Family Committee has ownership and accountability to educate church personnel and institute procedures that comply with this policy.

APPENDIX B

Grace Lutheran Church  
Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults and I agree to comply in spirit and action with this position.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children, youth and vulnerable adults involved in church activities and services.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree not to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child, youth or vulnerable adult.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and agree to comply with the Grace Lutheran Church Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy, and the Staff Screening and Background Check Policy against violence.

\_\_\_\_\_ In the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children, youth or vulnerable adults, I agree to immediately report my observations to the pastor or president of the congregation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children, youth or vulnerable adults to the pastor or president of the congregation.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_