

SAFEGUARDING YOUTH POLICY

The following policy is meant to protect and safeguard the children, youth, volunteers, and staff of Grace Lutheran Church, and to help us model safe, healthy, and appropriate behaviors in our ministries.

Definitions:

1. “Youth” are defined as those people 18 years of age or younger, including all high school students.
2. “Parent” denotes a child’s legal custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
3. “Volunteers” are adults who actively serve ministries at Grace Lutheran Church.
4. “Staff” refers to paid employees of Grace Lutheran Church and volunteers of Grace Lutheran Church performing the tasks of a defined church position in lieu of an employee.

Inclusivity:

Grace Lutheran Church invites all members, visitors, and friends to be a part of our ministries. We encourage youth to bring their friends to events and activities and parents are also welcome to attend events with their child. Grace Lutheran Church will not discriminate against any person based on age, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic or family status, or physical or mental abilities.

Screening Procedure:

Volunteers and staff who work with children and youth must go through a standardized application and screening process that is overseen by Grace Lutheran Church and the congregation council. The pastor and council reserve the right to verify information regarding background and history of contact with minors as well as legal history. No one will be accepted who has a criminal sexual or physical abuse violation. Volunteers shall be informed of the expectations they are required to follow in their ministry with minors and shall be required to sign that they will faithfully follow these requirements. Interviews may be required for certain ministries. If an application is denied, that person has a right to the disclosure of the denied application.

Prerequisites:

A volunteer working with youth must satisfy the following: be at least 21 years of age, has gone through the screening procedure, has been a member of Grace Lutheran Church for at least six months, and participates in all required training (examples: Sunday school teacher training, confirmation leader training, etc.) Exceptions may be made if the volunteer is accompanied by someone who meets these requirements under the Two-Deep Leadership guideline, or is recommended by an adult who has been a member of Grace Lutheran Church for at least one year. Members under 21 years of age may serve

if paired with an eligible member over 21 years of age, or when a roaming member supervisor is present.

Two-Deep Leadership:

Volunteers and staff will work under a “Two-Deep Leadership” policy during events, activities, classes, child-care situations, etc. This means that two adults will be present at all times (examples: Lock-ins and service projects, etc.) Single supervision situations will be permitted for activities that occur on a recurring basis at the church (Sunday school and Confirmation) provided that parents are notified ahead of time.

When youth ask to meet privately with staff members, staff will offer to meet with them in open areas, or in offices with windows or open doors. When youth ask to meet privately with volunteers, volunteers will offer to meet with them in open areas of the church or in public areas if away from the church. Seclusion should be avoided at all times.

Parental Supervision:

Parents assume the individual responsibility of their youth when on the premises of Grace Lutheran Church and not involved in a programmatic activity. Youth should not roam the church unattended. Parents of Sunday school children are required to sign their child in at the start of the education hour and out at the end of education hour. The sign in/out procedure will take place with the student’s designated teacher.

Drugs and Alcohol:

The use of any controlled substance (including alcohol and all tobacco products), and the misuse of any prescription or over-the-counter medication is prohibited at all youth events. Exceptions: Communion wine and prescribed use of medications listed on parental permission slips. This rule applies to youth and adult chaperones. If a youth or an adult is caught in possession of these substances, he or she will be sent home at their own or their family’s expense. If communion is served, wine will be locked up or disposed of by an adult. Staff and adults reserve the right to hold and distribute prescription medications at events or trips at their own discretion. Should they do so, a copy of the prescription, a signed note from the parent giving the staff member and/or adult permission to dispense medication, and a schedule of when the medication should be dispensed must be provided. Staff and/or adults will be responsible for recording when the medication is given.

Trips and Retreats: Trips and retreats also follow the Two-Deep Leadership policy. A minimum of two adults must be present for all trips, retreats, and other times that youth gather at or away from the church building. Three adults are preferred so that in the event of an emergency there will be adequate supervision. Background checks are required for any adult chaperoning an overnight trip or retreat.

Overnight trip Accommodations:

If both male and female youth are participating in an overnight trip, the adults must be both male and female. In the event that this is not possible, the event may be canceled. Arrangements must be made so that adequate supervision is possible, or parents will be notified and can decide whether or not their youth may participate.

Separate rooms/areas must be provided for male and female youth and chaperones at events. If this is not possible, both adults and youth must respect the privacy of each other. If adults and youth must share the same sleeping accommodation, at least two adults must be present. Furthermore, in the event that adults and youth must share the same sleeping accommodation and/or bathroom, adults and youth should never shower or change at the same time. A schedule will be put in place so that both adults and youth know their designated block of time to shower. No cell phones, iPods, cameras, or any type of recording devices are allowed in the showering areas.

Transportation:

It is the responsibility of adults at least 21 years of age to transport youth from one place to another during a youth event, trip or retreat. All driving laws (regarding speed limits, using safety belts, etc.) are to be observed at all times. Drivers are expected to be conscientious, responsible, and safe while transporting youth. If more than one vehicle is needed for transportation, all vehicles will stay together while traveling. All drivers must have a valid state driver's license for the vehicle being operated and must have proof of insurance. A copy of an adult's driver's license will be kept on file at the church office. Youth are not allowed to drive together to an event with no adults present. Adults should not drive a child alone unless the child's parents have been notified ahead of time. Youth are allowed to transport themselves to an event provided that a parent provides written permission at least one week in advance.

Movies:

"R" rated movies will not be shown to senior high youth nor "PG-13, PG-14" or "R" rated movies to junior high youth or younger children unless the movie is judged to be relevant and appropriate by a staff member. If staff do believe that the movie is relevant and appropriate to the students, parents will be notified ahead of time.

Technology:

Cell phones, iPods and other gaming devices should not be used during scheduled church programmatic activities. If a youth continues to use any of these devices after an activity begins, a staff person has the right to take the device away until the end of the scheduled programmatic activity

Firearms and Fireworks/Weapons:

Fireworks, firecrackers, guns, knives or any other explosive devices will not be brought, purchased, or used during any church sponsored activity. If a youth is caught in possession of any of these, he or she will be sent home at the family's expense.

Medical Concerns:

A first-aid kit and CPR mask will be brought on all retreats, mission trips, and events away from the church. Staff will be first-aid and CPR certified. Grace Lutheran Church will do its best to find adult chaperones who are trained in first-aid and CPR certified. Adult chaperones are expected to administer minor first-aid when needed. Staff will also alert adults to any medical concerns. Gloves will be worn when performing first-aid and all procedures will be documented (example: Band-Aid for a small cut on a finger) in a notebook in the first-aid kit. Staff will be responsible for bringing along the first-aid kit and CPR mask. In the event the trip is to a location without its own medical personnel, Grace will be sure to have an adult who is both first-aid trained and CPR certified.

Discipline and Expectations:

The following is an outline of the steps that adults will take if a student's behavior is problematic during programmatic activities (Sunday school, confirmation, etc.):

1. The adult makes a verbal request of the student to stop the behavior.
2. The student must discontinue the current activity for an age-appropriate amount of time.
3. The student will be removed from the room to the supervision of another adult and the parent(s) will be contacted.
4. Parent contact will be required before the student can return to class the following week. The pastor will also be made aware of the situation.

Grace recognizes that some students, particularly those with special needs or in unusual circumstances, may require a degree of accommodation.

Reporting Violations of this Policy:

Persons covered by this policy are required to notify staff of any violations. Staff will then determine what steps should be taken.

Reporting Abuse:

It is the policy of Grace Lutheran Church that those having cause to suspect that a minor has or will be the victim of abuse or neglect must report the case immediately (no more than 24 hours after the cause) by telephone or personal visit to staff. Staff will then report to the appropriate authorities. The alleged perpetrator should be removed and supervised until proper authorities arrive on the scene. Concern for the alleged victim, good judgment and open communication are the standards surrounding the reporting of an alleged case of abuse. Keep calm, stay with the participant and know that you do not have to deal with the situation or information alone. All reports are treated with confidentiality by staff and by authorities. Please note: members of clergy and licensed professionals working with minors are a "mandatory reporter" and thus are required by law to report to local county child welfare agencies, the county sheriff's office or city police department (Minnesota State Statute 626.556). Please see the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy for more information.

