St. Paul's Safe Initiative

A Policy to Ensure Safety in Ministry
With
Children and Youth
For
St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School,
West Allis, Wisconsin

Revised August 2025

Preamble

St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School of West Allis seeks to honor God and our commitment to educating children and youth. Christ declares in Mark 10:13-14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Our congregation is resolved to provide a secure, safe, nurturing environment for the instruction and participation of children and youth. This policy has been established to protect all who participate in children's and youth ministry, which includes but is not limited to children, youth, volunteers, paid ministry staff and the church family. These guidelines are to be followed by every individual who serves in our ministry to minors.

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Guiding Principles

What protects our children and youth also serves to protect our church. In no way will we allow these policies to interfere with our service of Christ; rather, they will enhance our Christian service. We are motivated because we are entrusted with the spiritual, educational and moral development of our children and youth. We are dedicated to providing an environment that nurtures the dignity and safety of each person and where healthy and appropriate relationships between all individuals are encouraged and expected.

Child abuse and sexual misconduct can tear the fabric of relationships within the church. These acts are reprehensible and an affront to our Heavenly Father and the mission of the church is hindered when such hurt is inflicted. It is prudent to prevent such injuries and occurrences and to have a clear plan of action and response should an allegation be made.

Abuse of any kind is not to be tolerated.

The Lord gives us guidance in Scripture:

- "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ***Genesis 1:26-27***
- "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own." ***1 Corinthians 6:19***
- "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands." ***1 John 5:1***
- "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.'" ***Luke 17:1-3a***

There are four principles that should guide decisions and actions regarding appropriate risk management:

Principle 1. *As risk increases, supervision should also increase.*
Therefore, more supervision is required for a youth overnight lock-in than a Sunday School class, for example.

Principle 2. *Risk increases as isolation increases.*
Therefore, care must be taken in such things as when and where an activity is held, and whether doors are open or closed.

Principle 3. *Risk increases as accountability decreases.*
Therefore, workers should be screened and must obtain approval in advance before sponsoring any activity.

Principle 4. *Risk increases when there is an imbalance of power and control (age, size, position, authority).*

Therefore, care must be taken to maintain a proper age balance between children. Approximately 25% of abuse cases are children molesting children. There is an especially high risk when there is a difference of 5 years or more among children's ages.

Definition of Terms

Abuse – any form of conduct that is unlawful, contrary to the moral instructions and doctrines of the church, and/or causes injury to another person directly or indirectly

Emotional Abuse – any attempt to control another person's life through words, threats, fears, and/or deprivation in such a way that it impairs a person's God-given sense of self-worth

Physical Abuse – any non-accidental act that violates the dignity of the image of God in another person, inflicting dehumanizing pain or injury. Physically abusive behavior also includes physical neglect, which is failure to do what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care.

Sexual Abuse – any sexual experience forced on one person by another, which may or may not involve physical contact between people. Sexual abuse also includes any role-inappropriate sexual encounter, even if consensual at the time.

Verbal Abuse – injurious behavior toward an individual or group characterized by name calling, angry outbursts, screaming rages, sarcasm and/or cool indifference.

Child Abuse – any form of intentional or malicious infliction of injury to the detriment of the physical, moral, or mental well-being of a minor

Communication in Crisis Team (CCT) – the team consists of the Principal, Senior and Associate Pastors, Child Care Administrator, other called staff in a leadership role (e.g., DCE), and the Congregation President and Vice-President

Minor (sometimes "children and youth") – any person under the age of 18

Personnel (sometimes "worker") – any volunteer, employee, church worker, principal, or pastor working in or on behalf of the congregation of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School of West Allis, WI

Level 1 – any *adult* church/school personnel working independently with children and youth, or working as the leader of a program, without supervision

Level 2 – any church/school personnel working with and under supervision of a Level 1 worker. This includes all volunteers and employees who are minors.

St. Paul's – St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School of West Allis, WI

Supervisory board – the group responsible for a given ministry within the governance structure of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School of West Allis, WI

Supervisory role – any role that places an adult in charge of a specified event or activity

Volunteer – service rendered by a person when no monetary compensation is given. Also, may refer to a person serving in such a capacity

Updates for the Latest Revision of This Policy

1. Added the Congregation President and Vice-President to the CCT

2. Clarified that all paid and volunteer workers sign the **Confidential St. Paul's Safe Initiative Screening Form** to acknowledge and agree to comply with this **St. Paul's Safe Initiative Policy**

3. Specified that all paid and volunteer workers must complete training per the specification of the Senior Pastor or Principal

4. Removed specification that one light must be on at all times, in favor of general requirement that workers must maintain a clear view of the interior of any room where ministry to children takes place

5. Clarified procedure for pick-up of children at the conclusion of activities or events, including requirement for workers to notify police if children have not been picked up and parents and emergency contacts cannot be reached within fifteen (15) minutes of the event's conclusion.

The Policy

St. Paul's will engage in St. Paul's Safe Initiative management strategies in the selection, onboarding, and employment of church and school workers, both paid and volunteer, who work with children and youth.

Securing Adult Workers and Volunteers (ages 18 and over)

Paid Employees

1. All prospective paid adult employees of St. Paul's will complete and sign a **Confidential St. Paul's Safe Initiative Screening Form** as part of their application process, indicating they understand will comply with this **St. Paul's Safe Initiative Policy**.

2. References will be checked for each prospective paid adult employee of St. Paul's with relevance to the applicant's involvement in child and youth ministries.

3. All prospective paid adult employees of St. Paul's will be checked by the background company known as ***Protect My Ministry*** or any other provider approved by Church Council.

4. An accepted call or contract will be valid only upon completion of a satisfactory St. Paul's Safe Initiative screening as outlined in steps 1-3 above.

5. All paid adult employees of St. Paul's will complete the employee version of online training in Child Safety for Abuse Prevention. Training must be completed and maintained for each paid adult employee in accordance with the training program schedule established by the Principal or Senior Pastor.

Substitute Teachers, Part-Time Teachers, or Educational Support Personnel

Substitute teachers who desire to substitute at St. Paul's and have been approved at another public or nonpublic school need only to share their background check, training credentials, and teaching license from the State of Wisconsin.

Part-time teachers (such as a reading specialist, special education teacher, speech teacher, or otherwise) who are assigned to teach at St. Paul's and have been approved at another public or nonpublic school also need to share their background check, training credentials, and teaching license from the State of Wisconsin.

Educational support personnel who desire to work at St. Paul's must share their background check, training credentials, and reference list or submit to the program at St. Paul's prior to employment and working with children.

Volunteers (ages 18 and over)

1. All prospective adult volunteers in the Children and Youth ministries of St. Paul's will complete and sign a **Confidential St. Paul's Safe Initiative Screening Form** as a part of the vetting

process, indicating they understand and will comply with this **St. Paul's Safe Initiative Policy**.

2. All prospective adult volunteers in the Children and Youth ministries of St. Paul's will be checked by the background company known as ***Protect My Ministry*** or any other approved provider.

3. No volunteer activity shall commence prior to completion of a satisfactory St. Paul's Safe Initiative screening as outlined in steps 1-2 above.

4. All adult volunteers of St. Paul's will complete the volunteer version of online training in Child Safety for Abuse Prevention. Training must be completed and maintained for each adult volunteer in accordance with the training program schedule established by the Principal or Senior Pastor.

5. No person will be permitted as a "Level 1" ministry role volunteer until they have been a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church or had a student enrolled at St. Paul's Lutheran School for a period of time longer than six (6) months. NOTE: This excludes called staff.

Securing Workers and Volunteers who Are Minors (ages 17 and under)

Minors as Paid Employees and Volunteers

With employee applicants under the age of 18, it is not permissible to do background checks. Therefore, all employee applicants who are minors will submit references that will be checked with relevance to the applicant's involvement in child and youth ministries. All minors (as employees and as volunteers) are asked to sign an acknowledgement of understanding and compliance with the St. Paul's Safe Initiative Management policy and will be classified as "Level 2" workers and thus be supervised by a Level 1 (Adult) worker. Minors will be able to serve only with signed permission of their parent/guardian.

Disqualifying Offenses

No prospective paid or volunteer worker who has prior convictions of sexual misconduct or child abuse will be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with children and youth in the ministries of St. Paul's.

Authorized Access to Information and Storage

Confidential forms and reports from background checks and references will be seen only by members of the CCT (and assigned office personnel). All records maintained online will be under password control; any printed records will be kept in a secure and locked location separate from personnel files until they are destroyed.

Guidelines for Ministry to Minors

St. Paul's Leadership in children and youth ministries is responsible for sharing the following guidelines with paid and volunteer personnel and monitoring their compliance:

1. Screening/Background Checks – shall comply with the policies of St. Paul's.

2. No Level 1 volunteer shall be allowed independent direct interaction with children and youth until said person has been known to the Senior Pastor/Principal or to the staff person responsible for the ministry.

3. Any instance or allegation made of inappropriate interaction involving a child shall be reported to the Principal, Senior Pastor, or any member of the CCT. The CCT will determine appropriate action to be taken up to and including Mandatory Reporting.

Supervision of Minors

1. All children should be properly supervised when present in the building. Parents and workers should not leave children unattended or let them wander the building.

2. Whenever possible, there will be at least two children's program workers present in all classes, clubs or activities involving children and youth. Also, any off-campus activities require at least two adult workers to be present.

3. All off-campus activities, special events, outings, field trips, and extra-curricular activities require parental permission slips**.** Signed permission slips must be gathered by the adult worker coordinating the activity.

Procedures with Minors

1. Workers must maintain a clear view into the interior of any room where ministry to minors takes place.

2. The "rule of 3" should be followed whenever possible: at least two students and one adult or two adults and one student should be present in a room together.

3. At the scheduled conclusion of an event, parents or their designee(s) should meet their children at the location communicated by the event leader (i.e., classroom, event parking lot, 79th Street door, etc.) for pick up. Workers should not leave children unattended while waiting to be picked up. If a parent has not arrived within fifteen (15) minutes after the class or event, the event leader should attempt to contact the parent. If an event leader cannot establish contact with the parent or any of the child's emergency contacts, the police will be contacted (except for St. Paul's students during times where After School Care is in session).

4. When transportation to and from events is the responsibility of the families**,** event drivers should avoid dropping off or picking up minors (except for their own children) without being accompanied by another adult. The Administrative Staff will set standards for who is permitted to drive during events. Any deviations should have the prior consent of the parent and be reported to the next

person in the line of responsibility.

5. There are no “secret” activities or organizations recognized by St. Paul’s. Parents are welcome to observe their child in any class or activity. As a courtesy to our personnel, we ask that parents inform the supervising adult of their desire to observe, prior to the beginning of the activity. Parents should not disrupt or interfere with the activity.

6. Topics, vocabulary, and attire that could not be used or worn comfortably in the presence of parents should not be employed with children and youth.

7. Alcohol should not be used by adult supervisors prior to or during activities scheduled with children and youth. Alcohol is not permitted to be provided to anyone under age 21.

8. All workers should use good judgment when having physical contact with children and youth. Workers are cautioned not to touch minors in any way that would appear intimate, threatening or frightening. Minors should not be forced to give physical contact such as kisses, hugs or sitting on an adult’s lap. Children and youth are not to be intimidated, grabbed forcibly, shaken or struck.

9. A worker must maintain a professional posture, avoiding emotional attachment and remaining aware of a child’s powerful attraction to persons in authority and trust.

10. If a worker suspects that a minor is in an unsafe or abusive home, he/she must report it immediately to the administrator of the program, school or church. If the worker is a Mandatory Reporter, he/she must also report it to Child Protective Services (CPS).

11. If a worker is seen endangering a child or acting inappropriately, the civil authorities and a church/school official must be contacted immediately.

12. At the time of registration, parents will be given an opportunity to decline having their child photographed for use in publications or displays.

13. Personnel in supervisory roles shall document any incidents which could be perceived as sexual misconduct or child abuse, being sure to record times, dates, circumstances, witnesses and any other such information as might be helpful in a follow-up investigation. The documentation of incidents will be filed and maintained in the Principal’s or Senior Pastor’s office.

St. Paul's Safe Initiative Incident Response Plan

All professional staff involved in the care of minors are required to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the civil authorities: The Department of Children and Family Services.
A report must be filed when:

1. There is reason to believe that a child may be abused or neglected.

2. Information is received that a child may be abused or neglected.

Volunteer workers must report to the professional staff when there is suspicion that a minor with whom they have had contact in their working capacity has been subjected to abuse or neglect. This includes any incident of suspected child abuse that takes place at St. Paul's.

Reporting Protocol

When an incident of suspected abuse occurs during the course of a church/school sponsored activity, it is the policy of St. Paul's to take the following steps:

1. Respond promptly to any injury, whether due to an accident or interpersonal activity.

2. Assess whether medical assistance is required. Treat the injury or get immediate medical assistance.

3. Notify the civil authorities and the victim's parent(s)/guardian(s), unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are the alleged abuser.

4. Complete a **Confidential Incident Report of Suspected Sexual, Physical or Emotional Abuse Report** immediately after completing Steps 1-3 above. This form must be completed immediately by a first-person source and filed with the Principal or Senior Pastor.

Communication in Crisis Team

The Communication in Crisis Team (CCT) will respond promptly to any allegations of abuse or misconduct where there is reason to believe such abuse has occurred, taking the following actions:

1. Suspending the alleged offender immediately of any duties. The individual shall be served with a written warning to guard against further incidents. In a case where the alleged offender is a paid staff member, the alleged offender will be suspended with pay, pending further investigation.

2. Complying fully with the obligations of civil law in all phases of any criminal investigation.

3. Reaching out to the victims and their families and communicating sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.

4. Dealing as openly as possible with the members of the church/school and the community, within the confines of respect for the privacy of the individuals involved.

5. Considering seeking outside assistance (i.e., legal counsel, psychologists, medical experts, etc.) to aid the CCT's investigation and follow-up.

6. Informing and updating the individual and family bringing the accusation.

7. Sharing the team's findings and follow-up actions.

The Media

Any news media inquiries regarding allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by church/school personnel should be directed to a designated member of the CCT.

St. Paul's is committed to dealing openly and forthrightly with any such allegations. Additionally, in light of the permanent harm that can result from such allegations, even if they ultimately prove to be unfounded, St. Paul's respects the strict confidentiality and privacy of all persons who are involved. Only the designated member of the CCT should speak to the media.

Policy Maintenance

Education

The policy and procedures outlined previously are applicable to all personnel who work with or on behalf of St. Paul's. This policy will be distributed to all church and school personnel by their immediate supervisor or the school secretary, who will request a signed statement of the receipt, understanding and acceptance of these policies and procedures.

Administration

The leaders of our children and youth ministries are responsible for guiding workers through the St. Paul's Safe Initiative screening process and informing them of the guidelines of this policy. The leaders are responsible to their supervisor for compliance with these rules.

Review

A review of this **St. Paul's Safe Initiative Management Policy** will be undertaken whenever an incident covered under the plan detailed herein has occurred or as needed. The review committee should include members of the CCT.

APPENDIX: REQUIRED FORMS

CONFIDENTIAL St. Paul's Safe Initiative Screening for Adult Paid Employees and Volunteers (Ages 18 and over)

We desire to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth entrusted to our care. The following information will assist us in doing so.

Are you 18 years of age or older?_____Yes_____No (If no, please do not fill out; use the Youth form.)

Name_____

Address/City/State/Zip_____

Date of Birth_____(Month-XX/Day-XX/Year- XXXX)

Phone Number _____

Are you a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church? ____Yes_____No

If no, what church do you attend? _____

Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to a charge of sexual or physical abuse of a minor?

_____ Yes_____No (If yes, please explain)

References are necessary for paid employees only

Please provide the name and telephone number of three individuals who are not related to you. These references should be able to describe you in a way that is relevant to your involvement in child and youth ministries.

1._____Phone_____

2._____Phone_____

3._____Phone_____

By signing below:

- I certify that all of the information I have provided in the process of submitting this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- I voluntarily and knowingly authorize any person named herein as a contact to give St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and fully release and discharge all such contacts from liability for information provided.
- I have read the St. Paul's Safe Initiative Management Policy (Revised August 2025) of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School of West Allis, WI.
- I understand what is expected of me and I agree to comply with the Policy and its procedures.

_____ _____

Signature Date

CONFIDENTIAL St. Paul's Safe Initiative Screening for Youth Paid Employees and Volunteers (Under age 18)

We desire to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth entrusted to our care. The following information will assist us in doing so.

Are you 18 years of age or older?_____Yes_____No (If yes, please do not fill out; use the Adult form.)

Name_____

Address/City/State/Zip_____

Date of Birth_____(Month-XX/Day-XX/Year- XXXX)

Phone Number _____

Are you a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church? ____Yes_____No

If no, what church do you attend? _____

Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to a charge of sexual or physical abuse of a minor?

_____ Yes_____No (If yes, please explain)

References are necessary for paid employees only

Please provide the name and telephone number of three individuals who are not related to you. These references should be able to describe you in a way that is relevant to your involvement in child and youth ministries.

1._____Phone_____

2._____Phone_____

3._____Phone_____

By signing below:

- I certify that all of the information I have provided in the process of submitting this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- I voluntarily and knowingly authorize any person named herein as a contact to give St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and fully release and discharge all such contacts from liability for information provided.
- I have read the St. Paul's Safe Initiative Management Policy (Revised August 2025) of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School of West Allis, WI.
- I understand what is expected of me and I agree to comply with the Policy and its procedures.

_____ _____

Signature Date

For parent or guardian:

I hereby give my permission for my child to participate as a worker in the children's and youth ministry programs of St. Paul's. I will support her/him through prayer and a Christ-like example. I also will ensure that she/he is dressed modestly and is prompt for each day's activities. I understand that if I have questions or concerns, I may call the church/school office and the person responsible for the program will return my call to address my concern.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

CONFIDENTIAL Incident Report of Suspected Sexual, Physical or Emotional Abuse

Name of person completing this report: _____ Date of report: _____

Name of person making this report: _____

Name(s) of alleged victim(s): _____

Name(s) of alleged abuser(s): _____

Location of incident: _____ Date of incident: _____

Details of incident(use back of page if necessary):

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Administrative staff member receiving report: _____ Date: _____