

**St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
120 N Main St. Lewistown, PA 17044
Safe Sanctuary Policy**

I. Mission Statement

St. John's Lutheran Church seeks to proactively protect all children and youth involved in the ministries of this congregation, adults working with them, and the congregation itself from harm and accusations of harm. To that end, these policies and procedures are presented as elements of a "safe-touch" program. The program does not intend to eliminate all physical contact between adults and children, but to define and encourage appropriate contact, and discourage inappropriate contact. The program is intended to address both elements of prevention and education regarding inappropriate behaviors during church-related activities.

We, the congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church, support the following policy for working with youth, in keeping with the mission statement of the congregation.

II. Policy

A "safe-touch" element must be part of the educational program of the congregation and integrated into its curriculum in all age groups. Informative materials must be available to parents/guardians on prevention, safe-touch, and other issues relevant to sexual and physical abuse. There must always be two adults present when working with children/youth and parents/guardians must be encouraged to become involved as much as possible in all children/youth activities. An "adult," for purposes of this Policy, is someone eighteen years of age or older. There must be at least a five-year age difference between adult leaders and the youth they are supervising.

The congregation and its leadership must be informed of the policy as well as the need for such, at least annually. A presentation of this policy must be included in the new member orientation by the Pastor.

A statement must be released to the community annually regarding the establishment of this policy.

III. Procedures

1. Paid workers, regular volunteers, and adults in supervisory positions working with children/youth as well as all paid staff, even if said paid staff do not provide permanent or temporary care or supervision of children, must complete a job application form, available from the office, and have a PA State Criminal Background and "Child Line" check completed. In addition, if the any of the above have not resided in the State of Pennsylvania for the past ten years, said person must complete the FBI background check as well as the "Child Line" and PA State Criminal Background checks. This will be done by the Mutual Ministry Committee, Pastor, or Council Executive Committee. Forms are available from the Church Office. Criminal Background and ChildLine checks will be completed every five years thereafter. Mutual Ministry Committee, Pastor, or Council Executive Committee will ensure that the checks are completed.

2. New members of the church must have a six-month waiting period before assuming a leadership role with children/youth. They may assume an assisting role, but not in conjunction with their spouse.
3. If it is impossible to have two adults present, e.g. Sunday School classes, then the entire classroom must remain visible from the public areas, and the doors remain unlocked and the superintendent of the Sunday School or other responsible adult must be in the area. Under no circumstances is an adult and child/youth to be alone together unless the adult is the parent/guardian. The only one-on-one activities permitted are public activities.
4. All children attending church nursery during worship services will be signed in and out by a parent, or parent designate, and be released only to the specified individuals.
5. When children/youth are having activities away from the church, a buddy system must be initiated such as each child having a partner for all activities. Child/Youth to staff ratio for off-site events should not exceed 10:1.
6. Anyone transporting youth must fill out the Auto Safety form, available from the Church Office. Permission Forms for Off-Site Activities are also available from the Church Office, and must be used by leaders for all off-site activities. Drivers must be at least twenty-three years of age.
7. During private music lessons given by the Director of Music, a parent/guardian must be present at all times during the lesson.
8. Under no circumstances is an adult to strike, or use abusive, demeaning, or sexually-oriented language with a child/youth.
9. The privacy needs of children, youth and adults must be respected at all times, especially when dressing, undressing or using the bathroom. Parents/guardians of small children shall be called, if possible, to attend to the needs of their own children. Parents of small children who may require assistance in the bathroom are giving implied consent to the nursery personnel to help with their children's needs.
10. There must not be any secret organization of any sort in the congregation.
11. Any violation of these policies or inappropriate behaviors must be reported immediately (within 24 hours of being made aware) to the Pastor, the appropriate Committee Chairperson, or the Council President. Always err on the side of safety.
12. Discipline shall be administered in accordance with the constitution of this church, with reference particularly to the sections on Discipline of Pastors and Discipline of Members.
13. Random walk-arounds will be done in all areas of the buildings when children are present, by the Superintendent of the Sunday School, Adults in charge, or their designee. Under no circumstances will youth/children be left in the building alone or on the church premises after an activity.
14. Minor violations, e.g. off-color language, must be taken up with the persons involved by the appropriate group leader, e.g. Youth Group Leaders. More serious offenses such as physical assault or property damage must be reported to the adults in charge or, if they are involved, to the appropriate Committee Chairperson. All infractions, major or minor, must be reported to the Pastor; if the infractions need to be reported to the local authorities, it will be done by the Pastor (except in case of emergency, in which the Pastor will be immediately notified). If the pastor is not available, the report should be made to the Council President.

15. Allegations of abuse are to be taken seriously. Information regarding possible sexual or physical abuse is confidential and those reporting abuse are protected by law. Those who have incidents reported to them should listen openly and non-judgmentally. Minister to the victim first, document everything, and report to the Pastor in writing, including the names of any witnesses. Any release of information must be done by the Pastor. Any potentially criminal behavior must be reported immediately to the police.
16. All documentation is considered confidential and will be maintained in a secured area with limited access.
17. Without regard to any allegations made, the accused must be separated from the accuser by the adult in charge. This must be done immediately. In the case of serious allegations, the accused are also not to have contact with other youth/children in the congregation until the investigation is completed. If allegations involve the Pastor, then the congregational president shall inform the synod. The separation will continue until the allegations are investigated by the Pastor or his/her designee. Those who are involved in the incident will be regularly apprised of the development of the investigation and of its conclusion by the Pastor and/or his designee, and can expect to receive continued pastoral care throughout the process.
18. All persons who work with youth/children in this congregation, including members of outside groups who use its facilities, are required to abide by these policies. All persons who work with youth/children are required to review and sign a copy of this policy before they may work with youth/children in the congregation. A copy of the signed policy will be kept in the Church Office. Those who work with youth/children must affirm this commitment annually.
19. Child Protection Training will be conducted on a regular basis. Mutual Ministry Committee, Pastor or Council Executive Committee will ensure training is coordinated and completed.
20. Youth leaders may be required to receive CPR/First Aid training. All leaders are encouraged to take advantage of CPR/First Aid training. The congregation shall endeavor to sponsor such training on a regular basis.

Approved by St. John's Council on August 27, 2018

Effective Date: 9/1/2018

Approval Signatures: _____

Interim Rev. Allen Hulslander

Brad Swanson, Council President

I have read and understand the above policy and agree to abide by it.

Signature of Volunteer/Staff

Date

St. John's Lutheran Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for all children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. The Safe Sanctuary policy is in place to protect the children and youth of St. John's Lutheran Church, as well as others invited as guests, from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

In accordance with the Pennsylvania law and St. John's Safe Sanctuary policy, all adults who volunteer with children and youth, are required to submit mandated clearances.

- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check
<https://epatch.state.pa.us>
- Pennsylvania State Child Abuse History Clearance
<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS>

For volunteers who have not been a resident of Pennsylvania for 10 consecutive years, an FBI Background Check is required.

- The Commonwealth has transitioned to a new vendor for digital fingerprinting, IDEMIA. You can register with IDEMIA, and be fingerprinted at a location convenient for you.
<https://www.identogo.com/locations/pennsylvania>

The fingerprint-based background check is a multi-step process. For general questions about FBI clearances, please contact the FBI Background Check Unit at 717-783-6211 or 1- 877-371-5422.

For IDEMIA registration, processing, or billing questions, please contact IDEMIA/IdentoGo at 1-844-321-2101.