

Child and Youth Protection Policy

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church

Olathe, Kansas

I. INTRODUCTION

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church desires to be a safe and secure place for all children and adults who attend or who participate in activities. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across every racial, social, economic and religious boundary in America. Children are most often victimized by individuals they know and trust. Such victimization causes deep and sometimes lifetime physical and emotional scars to the victim. The church is not immune to such abuse of children, either by its members or by those in a leadership position. To ensure the safety of children in its care, to protect the reputation of the church, and to reduce legal liability, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church adopts the following "Youth Protection Policy". This policy applies to all volunteer and paid workers of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church.

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church seeks to express God's love of all people and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent sexual misconduct and child abuse of any form, and to minister to families where abuse may occur. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, guidelines, and ministries must stand.

Although Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church regards sexual misconduct and child abuse as abhorrent actions contrary to the will of God, it recognizes that hugs and pats can also be appropriate and welcome demonstrations of love and affection, and that they can be appropriate in a church setting. There are many gospel accounts of Jesus' appropriate touching and being touched; for instance, in Mark 1:41, we read that "a leper came to Jesus . . . moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him." Members of the early church demonstrated their affection with the church elders in Ephesus. After the meeting, the elders "embraced him and kissed him." In I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12, and in I Thessalonians 5:26, Paul admonishes church members to "greet one another with a holy kiss." In this regard, it is perhaps wise to follow the counsel given in Ecclesiastes 3:1, "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven."

II. Definitions

“Child” and “Youth” and “Adult”

A “child” is anyone age of 14 or under. (KSA 21-3610) A “youth” is anyone not a “child” and under the age of 18. An adult for volunteer purposes @ Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church is anyone 18 years of age or older who is not attending high school.

“Paid Staff Person,” “Adult Volunteer,” and “Screened Adult”

A **Paid Staff Person** is someone paid by the church, overseen by Staff Parish and screened.

An **Adult Volunteer** is someone who has not been screened. They can work in a room with a Screened Adult or paid staff person.

A **Screened Adult** is a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. These persons may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees for at least six months. A regular attendee is someone who would be missed if they aren't in church.

III. Child/Youth Abuse

For purposes of this Policy, **child/youth abuse** is defined as any of the following:

Physical abuse

Constitutes any physical injury of a child by **non-accidental** means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation given for the injury. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the child's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may also result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the child's physical health. Physical indicators should be considered based on inconsistent medical history, the child's developmental state and the presence of other indicators.

Sexual Abuse

Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at the Church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor. Actions of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to, nudity to a minor, showing pornography to a minor, inappropriate touching of a minor, sexual intercourse with a minor, or any interaction between an adult and child where the child is being used for sexual stimulation.

Emotional Abuse A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child's/youth's spirit and/or attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

IV. Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers

Adult volunteers who regularly work with the Church's children and youth and each church paid staff person shall be screened. Those who work regularly with children/youth shall be trained on child protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement with children and youth. "Work regularly" is defined as being committed to membership on one of the Youth Counselor Teams, teaching Sunday School, volunteering in the Nursery, and assisting with other on-going Youth activities.

The procedures for screening are as follows:

- a) A written application must be submitted by all paid and volunteer workers. This application provides consent by the applicant for a criminal records check to be conducted on behalf of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church by a third party chosen by Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, and also provides consent by the applicant for subsequent criminal background investigations to be conducted as Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church deems appropriate during the period of time while the applicant is involved with church-sponsored youth and child activities. All paid workers shall have a criminal records check run; for persons who have not lived in Kansas or Missouri for the past five years, a national background check shall be conducted.
- b) Interview with designated individual or committee.
- c) Review of church policy/procedures as they relate to the prevention of child abuse.
- d) Required orientation and training activities appropriate to the level of volunteer or paid worker involvement.
- e) Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church Preschool workers will be screened and trained in accordance with Kansas Department of Health and Environment regulations.
- f) Where it has been determined that an applicant should **not** work with children or youth, those persons involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner. The appointed pastor or her/his designee should inform the applicant in person. The specific reasons for the decision should be given, whenever possible.
 - i.) Any individual who has been convicted of sexual abuse will not be allowed to work with minors.
 - ii.) Any individual who is shown to have a criminal record as recent as 5 years will not be allowed to work with minors.
 - iii.) If an individual has a criminal record older than five years it will be determined by the Beautiful Savior Lutheran staff if the individual may work with minors and documentation for their decision will be applied to the individual's file.

g) It is important that all records be kept in a secure cabinet in the appointed pastor's secure office. There should be a system in place that gives only the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor and Director of Christian Education access to the records. A safe place shall be provided to store all records related to background checks.

h) Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church reserves the right to run criminal record checks on any and all volunteers. Criminal background checks are good for a period of 5 years at which time paid staff members and volunteers must re-apply. Should an applicant be approved, but any time following the background check be convicted of a crime in violation of this policy, said applicant must notify the senior pastor, associate pastor or Director of Christian Education of BSLC that he/she may be in violation of this policy.

i) Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church shall cross reference all volunteers who work with youth and children with the Johnson County Registered Sexual and Violent Predators list once a year.

V. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work With Children and Youth

The Church shall ensure that regularly scheduled training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training shall be required of all paid staff members, screened and non-screened adult volunteers who work consistently with children and/or youth.

The training shall include:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. The Church's policy and procedures on child abuse, and the reasons for having them.
- C. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
- D. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
- E. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- F. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

VI. Supervision of Children and Youth

Supervisory responsibility for children and youth activities is vested as follows:

- a) First, with the Senior Pastor (or in the case of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church Preschool workers, the Director of the Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church Preschool and the Senior Pastor); and
- b) Second, with the paid staff member responsible for the age group involved (Director of Christian Education or paid nursery worker).

Volunteer workers shall follow the direction of the supervisor responsible for each

activity. Volunteers are not expected to follow the direction of the supervisor should they feel the activity is illegal, immoral or unethical. If a volunteer feels the activity is inappropriate, they should bring it to the attention of the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or Director of Christian Education.

Every attempt will be made to have an adequate number of trained adults present to supervise all activities involving children and youth, which shall include at least two (2) adults or, in the case of children's events, one (1) adult and one (1) high school student, at any activity. (The Preschool will staff according to ratios determined by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.) Adults and high school workers should be trained and screened as provided in the Worker Screening and Training sections above.

Supervising adults should remain at each activity until all children have been dismissed, and early dismissal of participants should not be allowed, except at the express written direction of a parent or guardian.

Properly executed parental permission forms shall be required in advance for any off-premises activity involving children or youth.

Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult and a child or youth must be confronted immediately as specified in the "Reporting" section.

VII. Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers or staff of the church shall be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

VIII. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two screened adults shall be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Any meetings held in an individual's home shall have prior approval by the homeowner and be supervised by at least two adults who are not members of the same family.

IX. Counseling of Youth and Children

In instances of youth or child counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate church paid staff person may meet individually with a youth with the knowledge of at least one other paid staff member. If another adult is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

NOTE 1: At the initial meeting, the counselor should first determine if they are qualified to address the child's/youth's needs effectively. One-on-one counseling should be limited to no more than three sessions.

NOTE 2: Continued counseling may only include three more sessions with parent(s) needing to be present for the last three sessions. Referral to another more qualified counselor should be considered.

NOTE 3: This is not meant to govern a licensed professional counselor in a paid counseling relationship with a child or youth.

X. Time Following Group Events

Following child/youth group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child/youth may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult. Under these circumstances, the general rule requiring the presence of two screened adults is suspended and the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being.

XI. Trip and Retreat Supervision

Trip and retreat settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are requirements and guidelines of this policy. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., all of the guidelines should be implemented to the extent possible. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both event host requirements and these guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion. In all possible circumstance, the BSLC Youth Protection Policy guidelines will be implemented.

XII. Requirements

1. There shall be at least two **screened** adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There shall be at least one **screened** adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
3. The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care.

XIII. Guidelines

Overnight Events:

The adult –to- youth ratio will be that as required by the specific gathering (ie: District Youth Gathering, NYG, etc.). For an event that does not have such a ratio established by an outside organization, the ratio shall be no less than one adult for every 4 youth.

When both male and female youth are participating, there must be at least one male and one female adult as chaperones.

Youth over the age of 16 may occupy a room without an adult, if allowed by the facility's rules. This room must be adjacent to a room where at least one adult is rooming. For youth ages 16 and under, an adult must be assigned to the room. An adult may share a bed only with his/her child. A rollaway bed is an acceptable means to allow an adult to share a room with 3 unrelated youth.

Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of youth members in situations where the youth are changing clothes or taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require.

Adults also need to protect their own privacy when changing or showering. Adults will not shower in the sight of youth or children. When changing, it is recommended that you change in private. If privacy is unavailable, be modest and discreet in changing.

At no time should any adult be alone with a youth in a motel/hotel room, unless the adult and youth are related.

Lock-Ins: Sleeping areas will be designated for female youth separate from male youth. An appropriate adult should always be present in the sleeping area if youth are present. At no time should one child and one adult be alone in the sleeping area, unless the two are related.

Non-Overnight Events (Pizza Nights, Game Nights, Hang-Outs, etc.):

The recommended adult-to-youth ratio for non-overnight events is 1 adult to 8 youth.

Programs that involve children and youth must always have adequate supervisory personnel. Events that do not have adequate supervising adults should be canceled. When questions arise, contact the Director of Christian Education or appropriate staff member.

The event will not begin until two adult workers are present or before a second youth and an adult worker are present.

Travel/Transportation Guidelines:

Youth shall always ride with qualified drivers age 25 and older for events. Youth will not be allowed to drive for youth functions. Drivers must have a copy of a current driver's license and Insurance card on file with the church office.

Adult drivers must have at least two youth in their care at all times unless the single youth is the driver's child.

All drivers must complete a form acknowledging adequate insurance coverage is in force.

All BSLC youth must wear seatbelts when being driven to or from a BSLC-sponsored event.

If more than one vehicle is used to transport youth, all vehicles must leave BSLC in a two-by-two buddy system to the event location. All drivers must use the same route driving to the event and returning from the event. If one vehicle needs to stop (example: for gas, for coffee, for a mechanical problem), then all vehicles must stop. No vehicle will continue on the journey until all vehicles are ready to continue.

XIV. Reporting

When the necessity for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect arises, the protection of children must be paramount. According to Kansas state law, pastors are not required by law to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse.

The following guidelines shall be followed in reporting suspected child abuse or neglect:

1. When a volunteer or paid staff of a Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church sponsored program or event reasonably suspects that abuse is taking or has taken place, he or she should report the abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency without delay. If the volunteer or paid staff decides to report the matter to the authorities, she or he should then immediately tell the Director of Christian Education of his or her actions, or, in the case of the Preschool, the Preschool Director, who will report according to Kansas Department of Health and Environment regulations. If she or he chooses not to report individually, then the volunteer or paid worker must contact the Director of Christian Education or, in the case of the Preschool, the Preschool Director, who will report according to Kansas Department of Health and Environment regulations. The matter should not be discussed with anyone else until appropriate investigation has taken place.

2. Following the report of an incident, the Director of Christian Education must document the initial report in writing so it is available for the investigating agency. Prompt reporting to social services, welfare office or law enforcement agency located in the county in which the child resides:

Kansas Dept. Of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS):

Johnson County: 913-826-7300 (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) After working hours, report to local law enforcement authorities. Other Kansas Counties

call 1-800-922-5330

Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS)

All Counties: 1-800-392-3738 (toll-free from Missouri only) or
1-573-751-3448 (from another state)

If the accusation involves a staff member, volunteer, or employee of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, the accused person will be tentatively removed from the position with pay to allow contact with children or youth (unless otherwise advised by the SRS or DFS).

The Senior Pastor or his designee will advise the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the victim a report to authorities has been filed (unless otherwise advised by SRS or DFS.)

The Senior Pastor or his designee will advise the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the accused (unless otherwise advised by the SRS or DFS), if the accused is under the age of 18, a report has been filed with the authorities.

All such conversations shall be documented by the staff member of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church. The documentation should include the following:

- a) The name of the volunteer or paid worker observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time, and place and any action taken by this person.
- b) The alleged victim's name, age, address, and date of birth.
- c) Any statement made by the alleged victim, (as given to the staff member by the victim or by the person to whom the statement was made) including the name of the alleged perpetrator, and the time, place and nature of the alleged abuse.
- d) Name of the accused person, the date, time, and place of any conversation with the accused, and any statement made by the accused.
- e) Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the accused.
- f) Date and time of call to alleged victim's parents or guardians and the content of that conversation.
- g) Date and time of call to SRS or DFS; name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation, and case number assigned.
- h) Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, if made; and name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.
- i) Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.