

The logo for Emmanuel Lutheran Church features the church's name in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is set against a background of concentric blue ovals that create a ripple effect. A small white cross is positioned at the end of the word "Church".

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

SAFETY PLAN

for

**Abuse Protection of
Children, Youth, Families and Vulnerable Adults**

2019

Revised 2025

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Definition of:

Child or Children- birth to the end of 5th grade

Youth- 6th grade through 12th grade

Vulnerable Adults- age 18 and older with any kind of mental or physical disability

Who Are We Protecting?

- Our children and youth and those who teach them
- Our staff and those they come in contact with on and off site
- Our members and visiting worshippers
- Our church committees and organizations who use our site to do their work
- Outside organizations who use our facilities
- Our property that may be used for God's service and not to our detriment

From What Are We Protecting Them?

- Abuse (sexual, verbal, physical, financial, neglect)
- Acts of nature (fire, tornado, flood, etc.)
- Violence
- Theft
- Property destruction

This document deals ONLY with A-1 and B-1 and is a document that will need to be edited for possible changes on an ongoing basis. The Safety Team will study and develop policies considering other safety topics listed above on an as needed basis.

Introduction

It is the purpose of the members and staff of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour, WI to provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage them, as well as their families, to grow in their relationships with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child/youth and vulnerable adult abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, vulnerable adults, employees, volunteers, and our entire church family at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Seymour, WI.

In order to ensure that staff is properly apprised of their responsibilities, Emmanuel has developed a series of procedures related to:

- *the hiring of staff
- *volunteers
- *the identification of abuse and neglect through training
- *operating procedures that protect from potentially risky situations
- *reporting incidents that are considered to be a threat to children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Background Checks

It is the policy of Emmanuel Lutheran, Seymour, WI to undertake a thorough screening process of prospective staff and volunteers. Our church requires all staff and volunteers to use "Protect My Ministry" online background checks to complete a background check AT NO COST to any staff or volunteer. Background checks are required every FIVE years. The link is:

<https://ministryopportunities.org/ELCS>

The link is also available on the church website. The background check must be completed by the starting date of your given ministry. The background check and training may be done with mobile devices or laptop or desktop computers. Volunteer training takes about 30 minutes. It may be done individually or in groups. Please protect your personal information from group members. Notify the church office if you need help or have questions of any kind. You will be directed to a safety team member that is happy to help you.

No one who has committed an act of criminal, sexual, physical or emotional abuse should work directly with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The church has other ways for you to help our congregation.

Online Abuse Training

After completing the background check, you will receive an electronic invitation for the "Protect My Ministry" abuse training. Working in a group to complete this training **IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED!** There is a 25-question test following the training. You are required to score 70% or above on the test. If you score less than 70% you will need to retake the test. Every participant is required to take their own test, even if you worked in a group. When completed, please print out your certificate. There is no "group" certificate. The certificate is proof of your training. It will be filed in the office. This training will be required every 5 years.

Inservice Training

Church workers must be informed of and demonstrate understanding of the rules they are expected to follow in their activities; an annual review is required of all staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers are expected to sign the Statement of Understanding after the inservice and prior to beginning their mission.

Expectations of Volunteers and Staff

- Teach that each member of our Emmanuel Family is **a loved child of God**
- Set a good example
- Mentor
- Organize meaningful experiences

Standards of Behavior for all individuals working in the church:

- **OPEN DOOR POLICY** Work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter- NOT behind closed doors.
- **DUAL LEADERSHIP** Two adult leaders who have completed background checks and training will be present at all activities involving children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- **PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS** **Unplanned private consultations** between an adult and minor shall occur in an area where another adult is nearby. Inform other staff that you are alone with the youth/child and ask them to randomly drop in. It should be a fairly open space like a hallway or room with a glass door like the

office in the basement. Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes will work.

- **Planned individual consultations between** an adult and a minor, like private counseling, requires written consent of the parent/ guardian.

Transportation

Transportation to and from events should be the responsibility of the families. During events, drivers should avoid dropping off or picking up minors without being accompanied by another adult, unless prior approval has been obtained by the parent/ guardian.

When giving permission for a background check we advise that you also give permission for a driving background check if you know, at that time, that you will be a driver to special events.

Respect of Privacy

Adult leaders and staff need to respect the privacy of minors and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. Situations requiring privacy include using rest rooms, changing clothes, and taking showers. If an adult accompanies a small child to the bathroom, the outer door of the bathroom will be propped open. If an adult accompanies a child into the stall of the restroom, two adults should be present. Adult leaders and staff must wear pajamas or similar clothing when sleeping at an event and swimming suits when swimming at events.

Separate Accommodations

A minimum of two adult leaders will be present at an overnight activity. If child/ youth participants include males and females, the adult leaders should be males and females.

Minors shall not share sleeping accommodations with adults, unless the adult is their parent/guardian.

Males and females will sleep in separate rooms at events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. When separate shower/ bathroom facilities are not available, separate schedules/ arrangements for males and females will be established.

Housing

When private homes are used for overnight events, the program staff member will make final approval of all adults involved as hosts, hostesses, and chaperones. At least two youth should be assigned to each home.

Secret Activities

Secret activities and organizations should not be allowed in the church. All aspects of the church program should be open to observation by parents and congregational leaders. Secret activities are prohibited. **No one should be asked that activities be kept secret.**

Positive Behavior Strategies

Discipline used in church activities should be respectful, constructive, and reflect Christian values. Use a gentle manner and avoid yelling. Physical, emotional, or sexual punishment should NEVER be permitted.

Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

- Name calling
- Discussing sexual encounters or involving children/youth in personal problems of staff and volunteers
- Secrets
- Cursing
- Off-color or sexual jokes
- Shaming
- Belittling
- Derogatory remarks about child/youth and their family
- Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children/youth
- Comments relating to a child/youth's body development or physical appearance

Appropriate Verbal Interactions

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

Inappropriate Physical Interactions

- Full-front hugs
- Kisses
- Showing affection in isolated areas
- Lap sitting
- Wrestling
- Piggyback rides
- Tickling

- Massages
- Child/youth clings to adults leg
- Compliments relating to body development
- Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

Appropriate Physical Interactions

- Side hugs
- Shoulder to shoulder hugs
- Pats on shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High fives and fist bumps
- Touching hand, shoulders, and arms
- Arm around shoulder
- Holding hands with children in escorting or reassurance situations

Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. The Youth Group is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group until formally dismissed. Adult supervision is required when separating to other parts of the building.

Dating and 5 Year Separation

Youth should not date or be romantically involved with adult leaders or staff in the congregation. Volunteers for youth groups must be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth in the program and have been a member of Emmanuel for at least 6 months.

Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco

The use of tobacco, alcohol, or any illicit drugs or over-the-counter drugs or prescription drugs that are not used for their intended purpose shall not be used by

any youth while participating in any congregational youth event. Use of such products will result in the offending youth being removed from the activity. Parents will be notified.

Youth Members of Boards and Committees

Youth members of a Board, Committee, or Task Force shall be in attendance with no less than two adult members. If parents/guardians are present or have given prior consent only then can the youth be present with one adult.

Leaving and Locking

The last three people, including the person locking the door, should leave the facilities TOGETHER. Avoid situations where one adult and one child/youth are left at the door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. If that happens, the parent should be called and let them know. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.

Visitors On-Site

The staff or volunteers serving the church shall be aware of who is visiting the facilities. Have the visitor sign in and out. Make sure the visitor is accompanied by an adult on their visit to areas frequented by children/youth.

Sign In-Sign Out

During child/youth activities, children, youth and adults (visitors, volunteers, paid staff) will sign in and sign out.

Ministry Leader Responsibility

The ministry leader is responsible for documenting and addressing suspicious behavior or any behavior that may be contrary to Emmanuel's church abuse policy.

Online and Social Media Safety Recommendations

Minor to Adult Relationships

- Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors. Minors may "friend" request adults. Adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with minors prior to responding.
- When and where available, adult leaders are encouraged to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
- Adult leaders who choose to accept "friend" requests from minors should use all privacy settings applicable to shield minors from any inappropriate content that may exist within the leader's profile.
- All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means is not confidential and may be reported to or shared with others.
- We strongly recommend "closed groups" but not "hidden" groups be used for youth groups. These groups should have both youth and adult administrators.
- Youth group social networking site groups should be open to parents of current members.
- Any inappropriate material that is not covered by "mandatory reporting" laws should be deleted from the site. Any material that is covered by "mandatory reporting" laws should be reported, documented for church records and then deleted from the site.
- Any content that details inappropriate behavior during church sponsored events/ activities need to be addressed by church leaders and parents.
- Parents should be informed that content that appears on youth pages or groups not sponsored by the church are NOT within the understanding of authorized youth workers.

Adult to Adult Relationships

- Adult members of congregations who seek religious advice from clergy via digital means need to be informed that their communication is not always confidential.
- When and where available, clergy are encouraged to consider creating a personal and a professional account to maintain appropriate boundaries with members of their congregation.
- Clergy should consider the impact of declining a "friend" request.
- Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communication groups to maintain contact with youth members.

Recommendations for Communication and Contact

Transitions

- Clergy who are leaving a specific ministry (congregation, cluster youth ministry, association, conference) should refrain from offering pastoral care through digital communications after the end date of that ministry.
- Former youth members and adult leaders of youth groups, due to departure, should be removed from digital communication with youth groups.

Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs, Video Blogs

- Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
- Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their clothing and surroundings.
- All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
- Clergy and authorized youth workers should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth.

Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Online

- All Communities of Faith should secure signed Media Release forms from parents/ guardians of minors who participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
- Any congregation that distributes video of its congregational services or activities on the web or other broadcast media MUST post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
- Congregations are not considered public space and therefore must inform participants when they are being videotaped.
- Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include names or contact information for minors.

Reporting Violations of Congregational Standards

If an adult volunteer or staff member is suspected of inappropriate behavior, action needs to be taken. This is the procedure to evaluate the impact of this behavior on the adult's suitability to work with children/youth and vulnerable adults:

- An allegation should be made in writing and submitted to the Administrative Team.
- The allegation is reviewed to determine if it substantially relates to youth safety and/or the work the individual is performing. (Use the standards of behavior found in this handbook.
- If the behavior Does NOT put children/youth at risk or raise safety concerns, then have a talk with the individual about steps to resolve the problem.
- If the behavior raises children/youth safety concerns, suspend the individual until the circumstances surrounding the allegation are reviewed.

- Notify people on a need-to-know basis of the suspension.
- The evidence is reviewed and the individual is removed if evidence shows there are child/youth safety concerns.
- Notify people on a need-to-know basis of the resolution.

Procedure for Reporting Child/Youth Abuse Incidents (neglect, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse)

First and foremost, out of caring, make certain you are making a report IN GOOD FAITH! Good faith requires good judgement, a clean heart, and a willingness for open communication. If you are sure you are reporting in good faith then DO NOT DELAY! All reports are treated with confidentiality by the authorities. When you are ready to report:

- Phone call to Outagamie County **920-832-5161** Have the Child/youth report (in appendix) in hand so you know the questions you will be asked. If you don't know the information then just give the victim's name. We recommend giving your first name and phone number, but you may remain anonymous if you choose. Reports are treated with confidentiality by the authorities.
- Fill out the form you used for the phone call and have it filed in the office **only**.
- Let the investigating up to the social workers at Outagamie County. They do NOT want to get anyone in trouble. Quite the opposite is true. They want to HELP!
- How will you support the person who was hurt?
 - Stay calm, listen respectfully.
 - Determine if the victim can return to the parent or caretaker.
 - Is there immediate fear of harm? If so, call 911
 - Offer a counseling opportunity
 - If the abuser is present separate the abuser from the victim.
- How will you support the abuser? On a case-by-case basis.

Procedure for Reporting Abuse of People 18 and Over

First and foremost, out of caring, make certain you are making a report IN GOOD FAITH. Good faith requires good judgement, a clean heart, and a willingness for open communication. If you are sure you are reporting in good faith then DO NOT

DELAY! All reports are treated with confidentiality by the authorities. When you are ready to report:

- Phone call to Crisis # **920-832-4646**. Have the Adult Protective Services form (In appendix) in hand so you know what questions you will need to answer. If you don't know those facts then just give the victims name. We recommend giving your first name and phone number, but you may remain anonymous if you choose.
- You will be talking to an Adult Protection Service Worker. Write down the case number as well as the name of the person you are talking to. He/ She will look further into the situation and respond to the situation within 24 hours.
- Fill in the sheet you used during the phone call and file it only in the church office. You have done your part.
- How will you support the person who was hurt?
 - *Stay calm, listen respectfully
 - *If there is immediate danger call 9-1-1
 - *If the abuser is present, separate the abuser from the victim
- How will you support the abuser? On a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

Churches need to be prepared! This is the legal reason for creating safety policies, but there's a deeper, more significant reason-to protect children Policies are only printed expressions of the value placed on all members. If the only reason for safety policies is to protect the organization, the church has missed God's Love for all, especially children and other vulnerable members.

Some people may think that our church is too small or that our church "knows" everyone we need to worry about and protect ourselves from. Remember, it's much easier to make plans and develop safety policies as a means of prevention, rather than wait until they are needed as a reaction to an abuse case.

Some churches tend to take the biblical concept of trusting God to an extreme. They think nothing bad can happen to Christians. We must be wise regarding children's safety. There is no automatic protection from evil for those who are faithful. We're to watch and be ready. Accidents will happen. There will always be unforeseen circumstances that need to be handled. But the church should build sturdy safety-policy fire blocks into the walls of its ministry.

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour, WI desires to be "a church that cares" through the implementation of the above policy. Adoption of these provisions will enable Emmanuel to provide a more safe and secure environment for each individual of our church family and its guests.

Parts of the introduction and conclusion of this policy were borrowed from an Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour, WI Policy and Procedures booklet from 2004 that still are pertinent today. Other parts were borrowed from the Synod and Parish Protection Plan from South-Central Synod of Wisconsin. Some ideas were borrowed from Outagamie County and others from online resources. The rest of the ideas were original ideas of The Safety Team Ministry. Outagamie County gave us permission to borrow from other documents as long as we do not sell our final plan.

FOR
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Consent for Transportation

As a parent or guardian of the person listed below, I give my permission for my child to be transported to and from church sponsored events, with the following conditions: Circle one choice below.

My child/children MAY
MAY NOT ride alone with adult staff/volunteers.

My child/children MAY
MAY NOT ride in a vehicle in which the driver is a minor who is
legally allowed to drive with other minors in the vehicle.

The following persons are ALWAYS given permission to drive my child (whether or not they meet above requirements):

Name of each child

Name of parent/guardian

Signature of parent/
guardian

Date

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Consent for Transportation

For Transportation and Off -Campus Activities

Please Note: Parent/guardian and child/youth must sign this form. Kindly return completed form to the your child/youth leader at your earliest convenience. Thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

Student Name:			Grade:
Street Address:		City, State, ZIP:	
Home Phone:	Parent Cell:	Parent Work Phone:	Student Cell Phone:
Family Email:			
Parent/Guardian:			
Student's Doctor		Doctor's Phone Number	
Family Health Insurance Carrier		Insurance Policy #	
Medications to be taken		List instructions	
Other Medical Info.	<i>Allergies, Conditions</i>		
Emergency Contact #1:	Telephone Number #1		Relationship to Student:
Emergency Contact #2:	Telephone Number #2		Relationship to Student:

Parent/Guardian: I hereby consent to the participation of my son/daughter in the Emmanuel Lutheran Church event noted. I understand this form provides permission for my child/youth to participate in a special program-related event held off-site from Emmanuel Lutheran Church. I understand that private or public transportation may be provided. I understand that ELCS has taken proper precautions to help assure my child/youth's safety. FURTHER, as parent/guardian, I remain fully responsible for any actions taken by the above named child/youth-including disruptive or dangerous behavior that may necessitate a phone call requesting I retrieve my child immediately. I hereby hold harmless ELCS, East-Central Synod of ELCA, its officers, directors and agents, and all employees and chaperones associated with this event. FINALLY, in the event of an emergency, I hereby give my permission to transport my child/youth to the hospital for emergency treatment or surgery.

Parent/Guardian Name (please print)

Parent Guardian Signature.

Date

***STUDENT:** As an ELCS child/youth or invited guest, I agree to (a) Follow all the rules of the event, (b) Adhere to all staff and volunteer requests and (c) Refrain from behaviors I know to be disruptive/dangerous/disrespectful. If I choose to ignore any of these, even after I've been warned, I understand that my parent/ guardian or emergency contact will be phoned immediately to retrieve me from the event.

Child/Youth's Name (please print)

Child/Youth's Signature

Date

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Confidentiality Statement for Children/Youth Staff and Volunteers

I, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge that in my service for my congregation I will have access to confidential information contained in the application forms and/or records of individuals serving the youth of our church. I agree that, except as otherwise required by law, I shall not disclose any such confidential information to any unauthorized person. I acknowledge that a proven breach of confidentiality may be cause for consequences that fit the situation.

Volunteer or Employee Signature

Date

Printed Name

STATEMENT of UNDERSTANDING
for Child/Youth Staff and Volunteers

I, the undersigned, am assuming responsibility for having read and understood the information contained in Emmanuel Lutheran Church's Child/Youth Safety Policy and will comply with the procedures and program laid out in said Manual and training as implemented by this congregation.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

MEDIA RELEASE

Emmanuel Lutheran Church uses photographs and videos of youth events in its newsletters, on the church website, and in presentations in worship. Most shots will be of groups of children/youth and your child's name will not appear. Please check do or do not consent down below.

____ I **do** consent for my child/youth to appear in church media.

____ I **do not** consent for my child to appear in church media.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date Date _____

Written Confirmation of Suspected Child/Youth Abuse Report

Date: _____ Report# _____ Name of Social Worker _____

ABOUT: _____

Name of child/youth

Birth date of child/youth

If you are reporting more than one child from the same family please list their names and birth dates on back of this form.

Street address

City

Zip Code

Parent/Guardian: _

Name

Address if different than the child's address

- What injuries or signs of neglect are there?
- How and approximately when did the abuse/neglect occur? How did you become aware of it?
- Names and addresses of other persons who may be willing to provide information about this case.
- Your relationship to the child/youth.

Your name printed.

Your signature

Your title

Your organization

Permission for One Adult and One Child/Adult
To Meet At Emmanuel Lutheran Church

At times a one child/youth to one adult meeting will take place at Emmanuel. We recommend that it ALWAYS be preplanned and have written permission from the child/youth's parent/guardian.

Name of child/youth

Name of adult the child/youth will be meeting with one to one.

Date(s) and Time(s)

I give my child/youth permission to meet one to one with the adult listed above. I agree to be in close proximity or have a designated adult be in close proximity to my child/youth and the above adult.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Comments: