



Safe Place Policies & Procedures

2013-2014

SAFEPLACE

Purpose: Living Faith Alliance Church is committed to providing a safe and protected environment for all participants in church ministries—children, youth, adults and the disabled. To fulfill this commitment as fully as possible, our leadership team (Governing Elders, Ministering Elders and the Pastoral Team) has adopted the following procedures when selecting ministry volunteers and new employees.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth or disabled persons will complete an initial ministry application. This application must be turned into **the appropriate Ministry Coordinator**.
2. The **Ministry Coordinator**, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The **Ministry Coordinator** will store all application materials—the application form, background checks, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked and secure location **in the LFAC Office**.
3. If the individual is found to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the **Ministry Coordinator**, or designee, will contact at least two references. The **Ministry Coordinator or designee** will conduct a criminal background check through a state law enforcement agency or other provider of such services.
4. When indicated by reference and/or background checks, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for ministry positions anywhere within our organization. "Said Person" will however be given **an opportunity to meet with the Governing and Ministry Elders to answer questions** and refute or offer further evidence.

EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The same procedures required for volunteer workers also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered.
2. In addition, a criminal background check performed through a state law enforcement agency or other provider of such services is required for all potential employees.
3. When indicated by reference and/or background checks, potential employees who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization. "Said Person" will however be given **an opportunity to meet with the Governing and Ministry Elders for further conversation**.

Waiting Period

It is recommended that all volunteer candidates be **noticeably consistent in their Celebration attendance and regularly involved in a pastorate** for three-six months or more before being considered for any ministry leader position involving contact with children, youth, or disabled persons.

SUPERVISION

1. At least two, approved, adults must be present at every function or program involving children, youth, or disabled persons. For large groups, the number of adult supervisors must be increased in accordance with state student/teacher ratio requirements (see Appendix)
2. Two or more adults must be assigned to monitor children's, youth, and disabled persons activities in areas outside the location of a ministry service or event that is in progress. The adults assigned must have been previously approved through our ministry screening process.
3. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.

COUNSELING

Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry Volunteers are never to engage in any ongoing counseling. You will refer all issues of counseling to your Ministry Coordinator.

MINISTRY RESTRICTIONS

1. For children ages 6 years to 6th grade, **it is preferred that** at least one adult female (**18 or older**) take girls to the restroom, and one adult male should take boys to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children. The presence of a second adult escort is also recommended.
2. Children age 5 or younger (boys and girls) **it is preferred that they** be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult (**18 or older**) female.
3. Only female caregivers will change diapers.
4. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children (1st grade and up) on their lap, kissing or embracing others.
5. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child in writing (sign-in or sign-out).

DISCIPLINE

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual.
2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the Ministry Coordinator *and* to a parent or guardian of the child involved. This should also be documented in writing.

[SEE APPENDIX FOR SAMPLE INCIDENT REPORT]

INJURIES OR ILLNESS

Issues of first aid and medical treatment beyond first aid will be addressed at least annually during Fall Orientation by qualified medical personnel.

1. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
3. Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
4. Always use gloves when dealing with/ making contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids. Supplies will be provided in first aid kits.
5. Ministry Coordinators and Team Leaders who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.
6. Persons who have received an injury will be given appropriate first aid as needed at the time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person. All such incidents should be documented in writing **by filling out an Incident Report within 24 hours.**
7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry Coordinator or Team Leader. Emergency medical personnel should be called if warranted by the injury. All such incidents will be documented in writing **by filling out an Incident Report within 24 hours.**

[SEE APPENDIX FOR SAMPLE INCIDENT REPORT]

NOTICE OF ABUSE OR MOLESTATION

For all volunteer or paid ministry workers:

In the event you suspect, or are advised of possible child abuse or neglect happening to any child or youth (regardless of who we suspect is perpetrating the abuse, such as church volunteer, church worker or parents/guardians or other), the following is to be followed without any deviation. We want to ensure our children are protected and want to ensure the person making the report is protected as well.

WHILE WE CANNOT PROHIBIT ANYONE FROM MAKING INDEPENDENT REPORTS TO DCP & P (Department of Child Protection & Placement) OR LOCAL POLICE, IT IS OUR REQUEST THAT THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE BE FOLLOWED TO AVOID POTENTIAL LIABILITY TO LFAC AND/OR THE PERSON MAKING THE REPORT.

1. Immediately inform your Ministry Coordinator or Overseer on duty. (If neither are available, contact one of the pastors.)
2. The Ministry Coordinator (or Overseer on duty) (along with a predetermined professional/or member of the pastors team) are to immediately meet with the person giving the information. They are to ask careful, detailed questions, that are unsuggestive in nature, relating to the report of abuse or neglect, to determine if the accusation is such that there is "reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth has been subjected to child abuse or neglect."
3. If the group of people listed in #2 determine together that there is "reasonable cause to believe that the child has been subjected to child abuse or neglect, they are to contact the church Executive Pastor (or another pastor who is on call). The Executive Pastor and Children's Ministry coordinator will make the call to contact the authorities.
4. When there is "reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to neglect or abuse" in such cases the parents or guardians are not to be approached, confronted or questioned. Allow the authorities to respond and investigate the situation themselves. (The authorities may tell you to contact the parents if they are on site or to inform them that DCP & P has been called.) If it is determined that there is "**not** reasonable cause to believe that they have been subjected to neglect or abuse" then the parent(s)/guardian(s) are to be informed of the situation so they can help process the child on what took place.
5. A church incident report shall be filled out contemporaneously and signed by each individual who interviewed or was present during the interview of the individual making the report, as well as, of the interview of the victim who was interviewed concerning their allegations of abuse.
6. In the event that one of our volunteer staff (who is a minor) is suspected or found to be the one involved in the abuse, they will be immediately removed from their position until the validity of the accusation can be determined, and the parents/family of the volunteer are to be contacted as well as the Church Lawyer. If the volunteer staff is an adult that is suspected or found to be involved, the Executive pastor (or other pastor) is to be contacted in addition to the church lawyer.

For your information:

In New Jersey, any form of child abuse or neglect SHALL be reported to the authorities.

The controlling statute is N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10, which states the following:

Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse shall report the same immediately to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency by telephone or otherwise. Such reports, where possible, shall contain the names and addresses of the child and his parent, guardian, or other person having custody and control of the child and if known, the child's age, the nature and possible extent of the child's injuries, abuse or maltreatment, including any evidence of previous injuries, abuse or maltreatment, and any other information that the person believes may be helpful with respect to the child abuse and the identity of the perpetrator.

In similar fashion, anyone who fails to make a report of abuse or neglect, knowing or suspecting child abuse or neglect is subject to a disorderly persons offense which is punishable of up to six (6) months jail and fines. The specific statutory reference is N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.14, which states:

Any person knowingly violating the provisions of this act including the failure to report an act of child abuse having reasonable cause to believe that an act of child abuse has been committed is a disorderly person.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their Ministry Coordinator when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
2. Ministry coordinators, Overseers and Team Leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions. However, workers will be given opportunity to refute or offer other evidence.

Internal Investigation

1. LFAC considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated by ministry coordinators. At that time assistance of legal counsel and civil authorities will be pursued.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be suspended from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of LFAC.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be suspended from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
4. This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, LFAC will also consult with legal counsel.

Dealing with Law Enforcement, News Media

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers of this ministry will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury abuse, or molestation.
2. The leadership of this ministry will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after receiving notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.
3. One member of the Governing Elders will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF POLICY & PROCEDURES

Annual Review

Each year, we will conduct a review meeting. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be reviewed with all volunteers, employees, ministry coordinators and supervisors, and the leadership of the organization.

Revision of Policy and Procedures

The leadership of LFAC, with the assistance of legal counsel, will regularly review this policy and the procedures established within it. If necessary, the policies and procedures will be modified in accordance with the bylaws of the organization. When changes are made, ministry leaders will communicate them to all employees and volunteers affected by the policy changes.

APPENDIX

