



OCTOBER 25, 2015

STANDARDS FOR YOUTH
ACTIVITIES
MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, MADISON, AL

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Standards for Youth Activities

Messiah Lutheran Church, Madison – Alabama

Approved March 16, 2015

I. Purpose

- A. This document helps Messiah Lutheran Church create an environment in which all activities involving youth are conducted with the highest Christian and moral standards. The standards set forth in this document will ensure the safety, security and confidence of youth, and the adults that lead them.
- B. We believe that the service of leading, guiding and teaching youth is one of the highest forms of ministry in the Church and require the support of all Messiah Lutheran Church adults to ensure its success. As a result, we must support our volunteers and staff with resources and our trust as they follow the standards set forth for all activities by youth at Messiah Lutheran Church.
- C. The volunteers and staff who have been accepted to lead activities for youth at Messiah Lutheran Church are expected to set strong Christian examples and exhibit desirable traits such as: possess a mature faith in Jesus Christ, be active in worship, support Lutheran theology, have a positive outlook and sense of humor, be respectful of youth and their families, be caring and effective listeners, be committed to youth activities for a predetermined period and to work effectively with the Pastors and lay leaders of the congregation.
- D. We believe that all youth are a gift from God and we have the highest responsibility to nurture and protect them. However, we recognize that there are those that would take advantage of the opportunities available to them to do harm to the youth involved and we are strongly committed to preventing this. We therefore have established, through this document, the guidelines for practices that create an environment, which helps to ensure the safety of our youth. However, if abuse of youth occurs, we are committed to fully cooperate with state and local officials as appropriate.

II. Definitions

- A. **Youth:** defined for purposes of this document as persons less than 18 years of age or attending high school.
- B. **Volunteers:** Lay adults working with youth in Messiah Lutheran Church activities.
- C. **Event Leaders:** Adult volunteers who are in charge of specific youth activities. Persons who are appointed to supervise children during activities on the Messiah Lutheran Church campus and are at least eighteen years of age and a minimum of five years older than the eldest child they are supervising are permitted under these Standards. Leaders of activities away from the Messiah Lutheran Church campus are required to be at least twenty-five years old.

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- D. **Program Director:** An adult volunteer or staff person who has responsibility for an on-going youth program such as the Sunday School Superintendent, the Youth Director or Music Director.
- E. **Youth Volunteers:** Messiah Lutheran Church youth who are at least fourteen years of age and working with younger people in Messiah Lutheran Church activities. They must be at least five years older than the youth with whom they are working.
- F. **Staff Persons:** Clergy or laypersons that have paid positions at Messiah Lutheran Church.
- G. **Activities Covered:** Everything that is Messiah Lutheran Church sponsored and includes youth. The activity may be on Messiah Lutheran Church campus or any other location.
- H. **Child Abuse:** Defined by the Alabama statutes. Generally it means intentional physical or emotional harm, including but not limited to sexual abuse, to an individual who is less than 18 years of age by an older person. See Attachment 1.
- I. **Safe Driver:** Licensed and Insured driver, 21 years or older with no more than one ticket in the last year.

III. Standards for Youth Safety

- A. Two-Adult Standard - Generally, this will mean that at least two screened adults, or one screened adult and one unscreened adult will be leading activities for youth at Messiah Lutheran Church. No youth event will begin without two adults present.
 - 1. This is the most important standard in this document. It is central to everything else included in this document to ensure the safety of youth as well as adult leaders. The two-adult standard provides an open and secure setting for youth activities. Adults have help in working with youth, the youth have two trusted adults to rely upon, and adequate help and security is on the spot if an emergency occurs such as an accident or severe weather.
 - 2. It is essential that leaders plan to ensure that two adults are available for all phases of an event or activity. It is also essential that parents and leaders communicate effectively regarding this requirement. Parents are urged to be cognizant of the two-adult standard and not put leaders in difficult situations by inadvertent acts on their part.
 - 3. A married couple or two members of the same immediate family may lead an event, however, due to the family relationship; a married couple will count as one adult leader. An additional adult will be required to work with them.
 - 4. It is permissible to have one adult leader for two or more youth when they are in a classroom setting such as Sunday school, that have open doors or closed doors with windows in the doors and other normal classrooms are adjacent and occupied on the same hallway with event leaders available in the vicinity. If only one classroom is occupied, then two adult leaders are required.
 - 5. A meeting in a private setting between an adult and youth is not appropriate. Whenever a leader needs to speak with or take a youth aside from the group, the door to the room in which the discussion takes place must remain open. If a

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- separate room is not available, the leader must remain within sight, but beyond listening distance of others. Discussion concerning a serious issue may warrant referral to the clergy.
6. Drop off and pickup of youth: The parent of the first child dropped off at an event should check to ensure two adult leaders are present. If two adult leaders are not present the parent should remain with that youth and adult leader until a second adult leader arrives. Upon leaving the event, the adult leader must ask another adult to stay until the last person (youth) is picked up. Parents are urged to be prompt in pick-up at the end of an event.
 7. A youth will only be allowed to be picked up by a parent or member of his or her family, or by a person that has been previously designated on a signed written permission form on file in the church office.
- B. Appropriate Touching: This standard allows a warm and supportive relationship without any suggestion of inappropriate acts by adults with clear and simple limits that youth and adults can easily understand and follow.
1. Brief hugs, high-fives, handshakes, touches on the arm or upper back are generally appropriate in Messiah Lutheran Church youth activities.
 2. Youth above age 3 years should not be picked up, sat on an adult's lap or physically restrained, unless the adult deems it necessary to prevent a child from hurting another child, adult, or him/herself.
- C. Access to Activities: All activities are open to visits and observation by parents and leaders of Messiah Lutheran Church. Other visitors are also welcome with the concurrence of the event leader.
- D. Safety Standards During Trips Away from Messiah Lutheran Church:
1. Parents or guardians must give written permission for participation in scheduled activities and all trips away from Messiah Lutheran Church. One permission slip per year for regular and recurring events is sufficient. (Attachment 2)
 2. Medical Emergency Authority will be required for all trips away from Messiah Lutheran Church facilities. (Attachment 3)
 3. Automobile safety requires the use of seat belts, and the selection of on safe drivers.
 4. Overnight stays require separate sleeping and bathroom accommodations for each sex. In addition, there will be at least one adult of each youth gender on the trip. Specifically, if girls and boys are on the trip, at least one man and one woman adult volunteer must be part of the adult leadership team.
- E. Activity Plans and Follow-up:
1. Program schedules and requirements will be regularly communicated between staff members at church staff meetings.

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2. Trips away from the Messiah Lutheran Church facilities will be communicated to parents well in advance.
3. Event leaders should keep post-activity notes for major events and trips away from Messiah Lutheran Church. These notes of successes and issues should be made available for future reference for leaders or their successors.

IV. Commitment to Adult Leaders and Their Protection

- A. Standards provide a framework of safety and security for not only youth, but also adult leaders. Parents are expected to work with adult leaders and support their ministry to children. The clergy, congregation and staff are committed to the support of the adult leaders. In return, leaders are expected to follow the standards in this document and Alabama law.
- B. The two-adult standard provides not only mutual support, improved supervision of activities, and appropriate response for emergencies, but also corroboration that standards are being followed.
- C. Adult leaders and parents will communicate in a timely manner on any concerns.
- D. Physical discipline or restraint of youth is not allowed by Messiah Lutheran Church. However, physical guidance or direction of youth (such as being ushered to “line up here”) is appropriate for certain activities or for physical safety.

V. Guidelines for Adults at Activities that Include Youth

- A. Adult volunteers will follow the highest standards of behavior toward youth. They should set a Christian example, and treat all children with the highest respect and love.
- B. They should set a good example in relationships with other adults and show courtesy and decorum with adults of the opposite sex.
- C. Use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs is not appropriate during youth activities and is not tolerated at Messiah Lutheran Church.
- D. Offensive language is not permitted.

VI. Guidelines for Youth and Parents

- A. While youth are expected to have fun at youth events, they are also expected to follow the directions of the event adult leaders to avoid disruption of activities, and to be respectful to adult leaders and other youth.
- B. Event leaders will provide event plans and guidelines as appropriate to youth and parents. The guidelines may take the form of a written covenant for specific groups or events at the discretion of the event leaders.
- C. Youth and parents are expected to respect and support adult event leaders who are in charge of youth events.

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- D. Leaders may contact parents if repeated disruptive or inappropriate behavior by an individual youth is causing problems with the event. Repeated occurrences may warrant counseling by the Senior Pastor.
- E. The Youth Director may dismiss a youth from an activity if the youth's actions pose a threat to other youth or adults. Dismissal normally involves having the parents or guardian come and pick up the youth.

VII. Screening, Membership and Training of Adults Leading Youth Activities

- A. Screening. All clergy, staff, and adult volunteers working with youth in this congregation are subject to mandatory background checks funded by the church prior to working with youth.
- B. Membership. All youth event leaders and volunteers must be members or associate members of Messiah Lutheran Church for at least six (6) months prior to working with youth in this congregation. Exceptions for newly hired Youth Director or Staff will be approved by the Church Council.
- C. Training
 - 1. All clergy, staff, adult volunteers and youth volunteers working with youth in this congregation must be trained in Messiah Lutheran Church Standards for Youth Activities and sign the Youth Program Volunteer application prior to working with youth. A copy of the application is attached, Attachment 4.
 - 2. Training is conducted periodically at Messiah Lutheran Church to emphasize the standards in this document and other information to aid the staff and volunteers in protecting youth and to work effectively and safely with them. This training consists of initial training and annual re-commitment. Leaders should contact the church office to make arrangements for any training that is necessary.

VIII. Reporting of Adult Behavior Concerns

- A. Processes
 - 1. The Senior Pastor and Council Vice President are the appropriate leaders to receive concerns.
 - 2. Person reporting a concern must identify themselves to the Pastor and Vice President. Anonymous reports will not be acted upon.
 - 3. The Senior Pastor and Council Vice President will confer with each other and act quickly.
 - 4. The individual in question will be notified and interviewed.
 - 5. Other parties who were present at the event in question may be interviewed.
 - 6. The Senior Pastor and Council Vice President will determine the appropriate response, such as dismiss the concern or decide together on appropriate action. In doing so, they may confer with the Church Council or any other group or advisor that they deem appropriate. Appropriate action may include Council action in accordance with the constitution.

7. Everyone who was a party to the event in question will be notified as to the resolution.
8. Quick responses are necessary to eliminate doubts and uncertainty. Most situations should be resolved in one week.
9. Responsible Leaders: The Senior Pastor and Council Vice President are the primary clergy and lay leaders of the congregation. Their judgment is trusted. However, these processes will not be delayed as a result of the unavailability of either leader. In that case, they will designate replacements to act on their behalf.

IX. Reporting Abuse of Minors

- A. Alabama Law: Alabama state law requires that certain professionals, such as clergy, report suspected child abuse (for children under 18 years of age) to either law enforcement or the Department of Human Resources. Additionally, anyone may report suspected child abuse to either of the two above agencies.
- B. Messiah Lutheran Church Leadership Notification: It is not required that Messiah Lutheran Church leadership be notified before reporting suspected child abuse, but it is recommended that the Senior Pastor and/or the Council Vice President be notified as a courtesy. A person concerned about a situation with a minor may wish to speak with the Pastor in a counseling mode. Counseling may provide assurance to move forward when a person feels inadequate in background or knowledge of abuse situations. The Pastor's experience could be helpful as a counselor, but he may not take the place of proper legal authorities.

Attachments:

1. Excerpts from Alabama's Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law
2. Parental Consent and Medical Authorization
3. Messiah Lutheran Church Youth Special Event Permission Slip
4. Youth Program Volunteer Application with Background Check Release Form

Alabama’s Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law

CODE OF ALABAMA

TITLE 26. INFANTS AND INCOMPETENTS.

CHAPTER 14. REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT.

§ 26-14-1. Definitions.

For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings respectively ascribed to them by this section:

(1) Abuse. Harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare. Harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse or sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation. “Sexual abuse” includes the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of the conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of the conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children as those acts are defined by Alabama law. “Sexual exploitation” includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution and allowing, permitting, or encouraging or engaging in the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child for commercial purposes.

(2) Neglect. Negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, supervision, clothing or shelter.

(3) Child. A person under the age of 18.

(4) Duly constituted authority. The chief of police of a municipality or municipality and county; or the sheriff, if the observation of child abuse or neglect is made in an unincorporated territory; or the Department of Human Resources; or any person, organization corporation, group, or agency authorized and designated by the Department of Human Resources to receive reports of child abuse and neglect; provided, that a “duly constituted authority” shall not include an agency involved in the acts or omissions of the reported child abuse or neglect.

§ 26-14-2. Purpose of chapter.

In order to protect children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through abuse and neglect, the legislature hereby provides for the reporting of such cases to the appropriate authorities. It is the intent of the legislature that, as a result of such efforts, and through the cooperation of state, county, local agencies and divisions of government, protective services shall be made available in an effort to prevent further abuses and neglect, to safeguard and enforce the general welfare of such children, and to encourage cooperation among the states in dealing with the problems of child abuse.

§ 26-14-3. Mandatory reporting.

(a) All hospitals, clinics, sanitariums, doctors, physicians, surgeons, medical examiners, coroners, dentists, osteopaths,

optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, nurses, school teachers and officials, peace officers, law enforcement officials, pharmacists, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, shall be required to report, or cause a report to be made of the same, orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority.

(b) When an initial report is made to a law enforcement official, the official subsequently shall inform the Department of Human Resources of the report so that the department can carry out its responsibility to provide protective services when deemed appropriate to the respective child or children.

(c) When the Department of Human Resources receives initial reports of suspected abuse or neglect involving discipline or corporal punishment committed in a public or private school or suspected abuse or neglect in a state-operated child residential facility, the Department of Human Resources shall transmit a copy of school reports to the law enforcement agency and residential facility reports to the law enforcement agency and the operating state agency which will conduct the investigation. When the investigation is completed, a written report of the completed investigation shall contain the information required by the State Department of Human Resources which shall be submitted by the law enforcement agency or the state agency to the county department of human resources for entry into the state’s central registry.

(d) Nothing in this chapter shall preclude interagency agreements between departments of human resources, law enforcement, and other state agencies on procedures for investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect to provide for departments of human resources to assist law enforcement and other state agencies in these investigations.

(e) Any provision of this section to the contrary notwithstanding, if any agency or authority investigates any report pursuant to this section and the report does not result in a conviction, the agency or authority shall expunge any record of the information or report and any data developed from the record.

(f) Subsection (a) to the contrary notwithstanding, a member of the clergy shall not be required to report information gained solely in a confidential communication privileged pursuant to Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence which communication shall continue to be privileged as provided by law.

Parental Consent and Medical Authorization Form *CONFIDENTIAL*

Attachment 2 - Standards for Youth Activities – Messiah Lutheran Church, Madison, AL

Parents and legal guardians of minor children are asked to complete this form and return it to Messiah Lutheran Church. The information requested is designed to assist the church in providing for the safety of minors during church sponsored activities.

General Information:

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Father's Name _____ Father's Cell Phone # _____

Mother's Name _____ Mother's Cell Phone # _____

Guardian's Name _____ Guardian's Cell Phone # _____

Child's Address _____

Home Phone # _____ Parent's Work Phone # _____

Mother Father Guardian

Consent and Certification:

I, the undersigned being the parent or legal guardian of the child named above ("the child"), do hereby consent to the participation of my child in the activities which include retreats, ropes courses, trips out of Madison, pool parties, skating, and other activities that may be associated with youth groups specifically at Messiah Lutheran Church of Madison, AL.

I do NOT authorize my child to participate in any of the following activities: _____

Medical Questionnaire

Is your child presently being treated for an injury or sickness or taking any form of medication for any reason? Yes No (If yes, please explain)

Is your child allergic to any type of medication? Yes No (If yes, please explain) _____

Does your child require a special diet? Yes No (If yes, please explain) _____

Does your child have (or has s/he ever had) any of the following: (Check and explain below)

Seizure disorders Asthma Heart murmur Diabetes Hay fever Kidney Disease

Does your child have any allergies other than medicinal? Yes No (If yes, please explain)

Does your child ever sleep walk? Yes No

Can your child swim? Yes No

Does your child have any physical handicap or illness which would prevent him/her from participating in normal rigorous activity? Yes No (If yes, please explain) _____

Medical Treatment Authorization:

I understand that I will be notified in case of a medical emergency involving my child. However, in the event that I cannot be reached, I authorize the calling of a doctor and the providing of necessary medical services in the event my child is injured or becomes ill. I understand that the church will not be responsible for medical expenses incurred, but that such expenses will be my responsibility as parent/guardian.

I agree to notify the church in the event of any health changes which would restrict my child's participation in any normal youth or children's activities. I also understand that the adult supervisors reserve the right to restrict my child from any activities that they do not feel is within the physical capabilities of my child.

_____ Date _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Insurance Carrier _____ Policy # _____

Youth Special Event Permission Form

Attachment 3 - Standards for Youth Activities – Messiah Lutheran Church, Madison, AL

Event: [event description here]

Location: [location of event here]

Dates: [date of event here]

As the parent/legal guardian of the following senior youth, I hereby give my permission for my child to participate in the event activities listed above, along with travel to and from [event location here] (canoeing, hiking, camping, fishing, etc.).

I give permission to [names of event leaders here] the leaders of the above organization to render First Aid, should the need arise. In the event of an emergency, I also give permission to the physician selected by the adult leader in charge, to hospitalize, secure proper anesthesia, order injection or secure other medical treatment as needed.

I further agree to hold the above named unit and its leaders blameless for any accidents that might occur during this outing except for clear acts of negligence.

Youth Name _____

_____ Date: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature

Emergency Contact Numbers:

Father's Name _____ Father's Cell Phone # _____

Mother's Name _____ Mother's Cell Phone # _____

Guardian's Name _____ Guardian's Cell Phone # _____

Youth Activities Volunteer Application

CONFIDENTIAL

Attachment 4 - Standards for Youth Activities – Messiah Lutheran Church, Madison, AL

This application is to be completed by all volunteers for any position involving the supervision or custody of minors and by all church employees who could have contact with minors in church facilities or on church sponsored activities. It will help our church family provide a *safe and secure environment for all boys and girls who participate in our ministries and use our facilities.*

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name:		
Date of birth:	SSN:	Phone:
Current address:		
City:	State:	ZIP Code:
Do you have a Driver's License: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	State Issued:	Driver's License #

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Present Employer		
Employer address:		How long?
Phone:	E-mail:	Fax:
City:	State:	ZIP Code:
Position:	Hourly <input type="checkbox"/> Salary <input type="checkbox"/> (Please circle)	Supervisor Name

CHURCH ACTIVITIES / YOUTH ACTIVITIES

I member of Messiah Lutheran Church <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (if No, Do you currently attend a different church? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No)			
Church Name (if not a member of Messiah)			Phone:
Address:	City:	State:	Zip Code:
Are you confirmed? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Have you previously done church work (paid or volunteer) involving minors 3- 14 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

OTHER CHURCHES ATTENDED (REQUIRED IF PAST WORK INVOLVED MINORS 3 -14 YRS)

Church Name	Address, City, State Zip	Work Performed	Dates ___ to ___

LIST OF ALL PREVIOUS NON-CHURCH WORK INVOLVING MINORS 3 - 18 YRS

Name	Address, City, State, Zip	Telephone Numbers

Have you ever been convicted of, arrested for, or plenty guilty to a felony or misdemeanor offense involving a minor? Yes No

If yes, explain:

Youth Activities Volunteer Application – Covenant & Signatures

List below any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for working with minors?

Participation Covenant for Youth Program Volunteers

Messiah Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all youth and volunteers who participate in activities sponsored by the church.

As a Volunteer representing the congregation:

I agree to abide by all church policies regarding the ministries of this church.

I agree to observe the policies and procedures in the Standards for Youth Activities. .

I agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to the appropriate church and/or government authorities.

I have attended a Messiah Lutheran Church Standards of Youth Activities Training Class Yes No

If Yes, List Date of Training: _____

SIGNATURE

I authorize the verification of the information provided on this form as to my employment and church history. I understand that a mandatory background check will be done.

Signature of applicant:

Date:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Member attending six months Yes No

Personal interview satisfied Yes No

Application Satisfactory Yes No

Former church record satisfactory Yes No

Release Satisfactory Yes No

Record check satisfactory Yes No

Attended training Yes No | Next Training Date _____ | Applicant Notified? Yes No | Attended? Yes No

Approved by: _____ Date _____