

ST. MARTIN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM POLICY

A. Purpose

The primary purpose of this policy is to maintain a safe environment for those children and youth participating in St. Martin's children and youth program. Compliance with this policy will also help protect St. Martin's and its adult volunteers from unfounded charges and legal liability.

B. Open Program

All aspects of the St. Martin's children and youth programs are open to observation by parents and congregational leaders at any time.

C. Participant Information

SMLC program staff and volunteers will keep record of a child/youth's name and demographics, guardian consent, allergy/medical limitations and publicity consent.

D. Volunteer Requirements

Prior to working as a volunteer, the following requirement must be met:

- Faithful participant in church community
- Completed Children & Youth Program Volunteer Form
- Receives St. Martin's Volunteer Training to include this policy, building safety, first aid and physical, emotional and sexual abuse awareness.
- Completed background check. (applies to Adults 18 & over) Background checks will be completed annually on all adult volunteers. Information obtained from background checks will be treated as confidential. The pastor will be responsible for reviewing the information submitted and approving each adult volunteer. No adult volunteer may regularly work with children and youth at St. Martin's without the prior approval of the pastor.

E. History of Sexual Misconduct

Any adult who has been convicted of sexual misconduct or abuse may not participate in any capacity in St. Martin's programs for children or youth.

F. Adult Leadership

At least two adults who are St. Martin's staff members or screened adult volunteers must be present at each children or youth program activity from its beginning until all participants have been released to a parent or another approved person. Only one adult leader may be permitted if the event occurs in a place/time frequented by other adults.

G. Meetings with Children or Youth: Requirements for One-on-One Interaction

A volunteer should not meet alone with a minor in a private place.

If an adult volunteer and a minor meet one-on-one for some reason, the meeting should take place on Church property or in a public place and the following requirements must be met:

1. Meeting on Church Property
 - a. The meeting must be in a room with an unobstructed window or an open door. All doors with windows in the church building are to remain unobstructed at all times by all staff and volunteers in the building.
 - b. A St. Martin's staff member, adult, or another minor must be in the same area of the church, although not necessarily in the same room.
2. Meetings offsite
 - a. Prior, specific consent of the minor and the minor's parent or guardian must be obtained.
 - b. The meeting must occur in an open, public place visible by others.

H. Respect of Privacy

Adult volunteers need to respect the privacy of minors in situations such as use of rest rooms, changing into swimming suits, or taking showers on overnight outings, and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. Adult volunteers also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

I. Overnight Stays

A minimum of two adults who are St. Martin's staff members or screened adult volunteers must be present at an overnight activity. If participants are both male and female, the adults must be male and female. Males and females will sleep in separate areas. Adult volunteers must not occupy the same bed as a minor, with the exception of a parent or guardian.

J. Camps/Synod Activities

When children and youth attend camps, synod gatherings or other activities where employed staff are assigned responsibility of care for them, those employees will count as an adult for purposes of the Overnight Stay in Section I.

K. Transportation

When the church provides transportation to a child or youth program activity, the Transportation Policy is to be followed.

L. Constructive Discipline

Discipline used in church activities should be constructive and should reflect the accepting and loving environment that Christ intended for us to have with each other. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

M. No Hazing or Disrespectful Behavior

Hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any St. Martin's child or youth program activity. Bullying, discriminatory jokes or comments, and other behavior that is disrespectful of others is not allowed.

N. No Sexual Behavior

No sexual contact is permitted at child and youth program activities. Other behaviors that do not involve physical contact, but are sexual or sexually suggestive, such as sexual comments or jokes, the showing of sexual materials, and the exposure of sexual parts, are also prohibited.

O. Gifts

To avoid the appearance of favoritism or reciprocity, adult volunteers shall not give personal gifts or money to individual children or youth without first notifying the parents and a St. Martin's staff member. Gifts to entire classes or groups are acceptable.

P. Reporting of Violations of These Rules

Any suspected violations of this policy should be reported to the program staff or pastoral staff immediately. Suspected child abuse or neglect shall be reported in accordance with Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code.

Q. Congregational Awareness and Review

A copy of this policy will be available on the congregation's website and/or in the church office at all times.

R. Effective Date

This policy shall become effective on _____, 2010.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Council of St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church in _____.