

This document articulates the St. Michael Lutheran guidelines for all employees and volunteers who work with children and/or youth. St. Michael will provide comprehensive training annually.



As you review, please keep in mind the following concerns:

1. The main objective is to provide a documented safe and secure environment for children who are entrusted to your church.
2. To establish proper preventative measures to protect individuals against sexual misconduct as well as to specify courses of action in the case of allegations or an actual incident regarding sexual misconduct
3. The second very important objective is to reduce legal risk and liability exposure.

Keep in mind also that incidents of abuse can occur in any church. Churches that have received advice from legal, social work, and/or insurance sources to establish screening procedures, and have not done so, would have little, if any defense, in civil court proceedings. A professional background screening services provider is contracted to assist with implementing and maintaining these screening procedures. ProtectMyMinistry 113 Flagship Rd. Lutz, FL 33549 Phone: (800) 319-5581 Fax: (800) 319-5582
www.protectmyministry.com

Standard of Conduct: All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, of St. Michael are expected to comply with the established policy on Sexual Misconduct. Any actions contrary to the church policy will be dealt with swiftly and may include disciplinary measures up to and including termination, as well as legal ramifications when applicable.

Definitions

- Child Sexual Abuse – any sexual activity with a child—whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim” (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992).
- Sexual activity – may be violent or non-violent, touching or non-touching, and is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness. It involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.
- Sexual Misconduct – inappropriate behavior relating to or involving a sexual nature.

Child Protection Guidelines adopted by St. Michael Lutheran:

All adults and youth, both employed and volunteer, who work with minors for a sustained period of time in a supervisory manner must be screened and undergo a criminal background check prior to beginning work. All persons who work with minors for a sustained period of time in a supervisory manner must undergo a Screening Process. The steps and checklist to be used in the Screening Process are labeled “Appendix A”.

1. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children/youth or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children will not be employed and shall not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors.
2. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need and will receive the love and acceptance of our church family.
3. Employees and volunteers who work with children and youth for a sustained period of time in a supervisory manner shall observe the “two-person rule” or the “open door policy” at ALL times. The “two-person rule” requires that employees and volunteers and supervisors shall make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where an employed or volunteer worker is alone with children or youth without a partner. The “open door policy” requires the door be open at all times. It is understood between the parent and staff person who is working with students in the fine arts (i.e. music lessons) that rehearsal rooms will have closed doors with windows in them and that every effort will be made to have another adult in the facility during the music lesson.
4. All employees and volunteers working with children and youth for a sustained period of time in a supervisory manner are required to be members or active constituents of St. Michael ministries for a minimum of one month before they begin their work.
5. Identification badges are to be worn at all times and each staff member will have an established process of signing in and out of children for work with volunteers.
6. Adults (age 18 or older) will be present with teenage volunteers.
7. Any supervisor is responsible to address suspicious behavior or any behavior that may be contrary to church policy and to document and report such occurrences to the proper authorities.
8. Our guidelines and procedures for reporting suspected incidents of abuse, or any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate are labeled “Appendix B”.
9. Our guidelines and procedures for responding to reported incidents of abuse are labeled “Appendix C”.

The St. Michael AIM (Administrators In Ministry) will have the responsibility to implement and enforce these guidelines and procedures, including the training of employees and volunteers, maintaining confidential records, and implementing the screening process.

Appendix A St. Michael Lutheran Child Protection Guidelines



Checklist for Employees and Volunteers:

a) Pre-screening of Workers

1. All paid workers, part time and full time, will fill out an application and a primary screening for volunteer workers application.
2. All volunteer workers will fill out a primary screening for volunteer workers application.
3. All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will be interviewed by an authority within the applicable department.
4. All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will provide a valid form of ID (i.e., state driver's license, social security card, or other acceptable form of ID).
5. All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will provide at least two (2) professional/personal references upon application to be conducted prior to any service with the church. The references are to be conducted by an authority within the church. The authority should note any information they tried to secure but could not verify or obtain.
6. All workers, volunteer and paid, full-time and part-time, will sign a release for Criminal Records Check to be used at the church's discretion. Workers will complete the Authorization for Background Check form as a Word document and return it to the office for processing with a payment of \$45.00 made payable to SML and please put in the memo section background check.
7. All full-time paid workers will sign a release for Criminal Records Check and undergo a criminal background check prior to any activity of employment with the church.
8. All employees and volunteers working with children and youth for a sustained period of time in a supervisory manner are required to be members or active constituents of St. Michael ministries for a minimum of one month before they begin their work with children.
9. No applicant or volunteer ever convicted of a sexual related crime is eligible for service in a position with direct relation to children.
10. Any applicant or volunteer who is a survivor of child abuse in the past must meet with a staff member prior to service in a position with direct relation to children.

Administrator's Signature:

Date:

Worker/Volunteer Signature:

Date:

Note: This form to be posted in each worker's file. No worker is to be assigned until completion of the checklist.

Appendix B St. Michael Lutheran Child Protection Guidelines



REPORTING PROCEDURES

The law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and, in organizations such as St. Michael to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore, all employees and volunteers at St. Michael must adhere to the following procedures:

1. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or violation of the child Protection Guidelines of St. Michael, the employee or volunteer shall immediately notify the pastor or, in the absence of the pastor, a person designated by the pastor.
2. All allegations must be taken seriously.
3. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or neglect, an employee or volunteer will also immediately make a report to the local child protection service or law enforcement agency. All allegations should be reported to the established authority and/or Human Resources as immediately as possible.
4. The established authority and/or Human Resources will notify the parents or legal guardian.
5. All situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
6. Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities when applicable.
7. No accused will be addressed by anyone other than the established authorities and/or Human Resources until the safety of the child or victim is secured.
8. No victim involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for reporting an allegation will be retaliated against.
9. Indicators:
 - Physical signs of molestation may include:
 - lacerations and bruises
 - irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
 - difficulty with urination
 - discomfort when sitting
 - torn or bloody underclothing
 - venereal disease
 - Behavioral signs of molestation may include:
 - nightmares
 - anxiety when approaching the church building or nursery or preschool area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
 - nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
 - sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior
 - withdrawal from church activities and friends
 - Verbal signs of molestation may include statements such as:
 - "I don't like ."
 - "does things to me when we're alone."
 - "I don't like to be alone with ."
 - "fooled around with me."

* Adapted from Child Abuse: Governing Law and Legislation by I. Sloan (1983)

1. Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.
2. All church employees and volunteers working with minor children will receive training at the beginning of each church administrative year regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

Appendix C

St. Michael Lutheran Child Protection Guidelines



RESPONSE PROCEDURES

1. All allegations will be investigated expeditiously by established authorities and/or Human Resources.
2. No individual involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for investigating an allegation will be retaliated against.
3. The official spokesperson for St. Michael Lutheran shall be the Pastor, or in the absence of the Pastor, the previously designated spokesperson. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
4. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protection Services agency of the county, our insurance carrier, and the FL/GA District President.
5. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protection Service or law enforcement authorities.
6. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
7. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained, until allegations are cleared by authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
8. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. All details, interviews, and information will remain confidential to those legitimately involved in the investigation. Any individual or group responsible for a breach in this confidentiality is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
9. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the Pastor or, in the absence of the Pastor, by the previously designated spokesperson, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.