

The “Why” of Safe Haven

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.” Psalm 91:2

God’s loving embrace enfolds us and is our protective shield. The Church and its congregations are the day-to-day human manifestation of that embrace and shield. We, the people of God, are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure that all our ministries keep the young, the vulnerable, our elderly and their caregivers safe from all harm and abuse.

Child and elder abuse, sexual misconduct, misuse of power and authority, violation of the vulnerable, bullying, abuse of drugs and alcohol are just a few of the harmful interactions in our culture. Christ the King Lutheran Church (CtK) cannot ignore this reality. In God’s love, we must respond with direct, positive, and preventative actions to build and sustain CtK as a Safe Haven – a safe place for all people.

A Safe Haven is a place of security, safety, and protection from all harm and abuse. It is a space where children and adults experience the comfort of God’s embrace. People of all ages are entitled to such a place and space, whether they participate in ministries and activities offered on the grounds of CtK or off site. Creating a Safe Haven is a lifelong process of learning, caring, and keeping promises to protect and provide safety so all persons can flourish. This happens through relationships built on trust, integrity and respect. Awareness, education, and prevention planning are ways Christ the King Lutheran Church can be proactive and provide a Safe Haven for the people with whom we work and serve.

Adapted from Safe Haven: A Resource for Congregations, published by Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA as adopted at Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly May 27-29, 2010

Safe Haven Policy

The following policy was developed to assist Christ the King Lutheran Church, ELCA, (CtK) in keeping youth, children, and at-risk adults safe from abuse or harm. This policy is designed to protect the young people and adults participating in this ministry as well as the congregation as a whole. The Pastor and Director of Faith Formation will be responsible for the supervision of all schools, youth organizations, and visitation ministries of this congregation. This policy does not apply to nor does it supersede the Pastor/Counselee or Stephen Minister/Counselee relationship. The words “children” and “youth” as well as “activity” and “ministry” will be used interchangeably in this document. The term “at-risk adult” applies to any person 18 years or older who is susceptible to mistreatment; i.e. the elderly or those who lack sufficient understanding or capacity to make or communicate responsible decisions.

a. GENERAL RULES

- 1) Staff and Volunteers: All staff and volunteers working with children and at-risk adults at Christ the King Lutheran Church, ELCA, shall **read and abide** by this *Safe Haven Policy*, **read** *The “Why” of Safe Haven* document and **sign** the *Safe Haven Covenant*. Additional covenants may be required on special activities.
- 2) Two Adults Rule: A minimum of two adults should be present at all church sponsored youth/ children/at-risk adult activities and ministry programs. For youth activities, it is preferable that one of the adults will be the parent of a participating youth. One of the adults will be at least 21 years of age and both should be a minimum of five years older than the youth participating.
- 3) Background Checks: All staff and volunteers working with at-risk adults or children are required to pass a background check, for which Social Security numbers, birthdates and full names must be provided. Fingerprints for a more extensive background check may also be required.
- 4) Parent/Guardian Permission: Permission slips/Liability waivers will be obtained when an event involves leaving church property for a church sponsored activity, holding an overnight event, and for transportation provided for church sponsored activities (at-risk adults must sign the CtK Passenger Transport Policy).
- 5) Touch: Physical punishment will **not** be administered to anyone participating in a church sponsored activity. Sexual contact in any form is not permitted. Touching should always respond to the needs of the recipient and not to the needs of the giver. (See “Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Youth and Children”, section f below.)
- 6) Reporting Rule: The church will follow all state laws regarding reporting of suspected physical or sexual abuse. Anyone made aware of suspected abuse will report the incident immediately to the Pastor, Director of Faith Formation or Church Administrator. Members of council and other recognized CtK church leaders, staff or volunteer, are required by law to report any cases inappropriate behavior to the Pastor, Director of Faith Formation or Church Administrator, as well as to county Social Services department or local law enforcement agency.
- 7) Nursery: Volunteers and staff are to maintain a clean and safe environment for the children. Specific guidelines for the nursery will be posted in the nursery and at changing tables.
- 8) Classrooms: Window blinds are to remain open at all times. The doors will remain open in rooms where there are no internal windows in the room.

b. OVERNIGHTS

- 1) Sleeping Arrangements: Every reasonable effort shall be taken to safeguard our youth and at-risk adults in every type of sleeping arrangement that arises. Sleeping arrangements will be divided by gender. At no time will youth and adults, or unmarried adults, share the same bed.
- 2) If there are boys and girls attending the overnight, there will be both a male and female adult present. The youth to adult ratio shall not exceed eight to one. (i.e. If there is 1 boy and 10 girls attending the overnight, there must be one male and two female adults present.)

c. DRIVING

- 1) Drivers for all church sponsored activities shall be over 21, have a valid driver's license, carry their own motor vehicle insurance, and understand, sign, and abide by CtK's Transportation Policy..
- 2) Drivers using vehicles not owned by Christ the King Lutheran Church, ELCA, shall insure that the vehicle meets all operational requirements and have all required safety equipment mandated by the Colorado Motor Vehicle Code.
- 3) Church-owned vehicles shall only be driven by those persons on the Approved Drivers List on file in the church office. Approved drivers shall abide by the additional safety checklist provided in the church office.
- 4) All participants must sign and abide by the Transportation Policy when on church sponsored trips or activities that require transport.

e. TRAINING

Christ the King Lutheran Church, ELCA, provides to staff a minimum of two hours of initial training within one month of employment and every 2 years thereafter, on issues of abuse in church settings (i.e. Praesidium's Armatus Learn to Protect System). This training is also required for all volunteers who regularly supervise or participate in the activities of young people and/or at-risk adults.

f. GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE AFFECTION WITH CHILDREN AND AT-RISK ADULTS

- 1) Love, support and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries. Some examples of positive and **appropriate** forms of affection are as follows:
 - Brief hugs
 - Pats on the back or shoulder
 - Handshakes
 - "High- fives", "knuckles", and hand slapping
 - Verbal praise
 - Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms
 - Arm around shoulders
 - Holding hands while walking with small children

- Sitting *beside* small children
 - Kneeling or bending down for hugs
 - Holding hands during prayer
 - Pats on the head when culturally or age-appropriate
 - Giving gifts appropriate to the activity to all participants
- 2) The following forms of affection are considered to be **inappropriate** with children and at-risk adults in a ministry setting:
- Full body hugs or lengthy embraces
 - Kissing on the mouth
 - Holding children over three years old on the lap
 - Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering, toileting or dressing of infants or toddlers
 - Showing affection in isolated areas or locked areas such as closets, offices, bathrooms, staff only areas or other private rooms. On a trip this is to include vehicles.
 - Occupying a bed or sleeping bag with a child/youth/non-spousal at-risk adult
 - Caressing knees or legs
 - Wrestling
 - Tickling below the neck or above the ankle
 - Piggyback rides
 - Any type of body massage given or received
 - Any form of unwanted affection
 - Comments or compliments (spoken, written or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be: “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
 - Snapping of bras or giving “wedgies” or similar touches of underwear, whether or not it is covered by other clothing
 - “Sexting” and any sharing of electronic images or descriptions of a sexual nature
 - Privately giving or accepting gifts or money to or from an individuals
 - Private meals in non-public venues Frequent association with an individual child/youth/at-risk adult outside of church related activities

Safe Haven Covenant

Because God calls us to be a cross-generational community of faith and because young people are the most important gifts God entrusts to us, I covenant with the congregation of Christ the King Lutheran Church, ELCA (CtK), to follow the Safe Haven policies, procedures and guidelines as a condition of my volunteer participation and leadership in all related ministry and activities.

I will:

- ✓ Become familiar with the objectives and guidelines of the CtK children/youth/at-risk adult ministries and strive to achieve these objectives and communicate them appropriately.
- ✓ Conduct myself in a manner that reflects my Christian faith and positively represents my family, CtK, and Rocky Mountain Synod.
- ✓ Care for myself physically, emotionally and spiritually, with a goal of positive well-being and over-all health.
- ✓ Support and participate in all activities, honoring my own physical and psychological comfort levels, and work together to learn and grow from this experience.
- ✓ Uphold the authority of those responsible for the program or activity in which I am participating and assist them in every way to encourage learning and faith formation.
- ✓ Honor the schedule, be punctual for events and understand there is no individual “coming and going” unless I have the permission of the staff member or volunteer in charge.
- ✓ Be aware of and keep quiet times.
- ✓ Be mindful of others’ right to privacy and respect their personal belongings.
- ✓ Be responsible and accountable for the stewardship of all resources entrusted to me.
- ✓ Use all facilities made available to me/us with care. If I hurt or accidentally damage property, I will take responsibility for the damage done and inform the staff member or volunteer in charge immediately.
- ✓ Treat everyone with respect, patience, courtesy, dignity and consideration.
 - I will not tolerate the humiliation or ridicule of anyone in any environment where I am present.
 - I will honor the equality of all people, avoiding all forms of discrimination and respect the dignity of each person without regard to age, status, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or physical or mental abilities.
 - I will use positive reinforcement and effective communication skills
 - I will not criticize nor engage in unhealthy competition, comparison, or use physical discipline or force as a retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior on the part of another.

I will:

- ✓ Promote an environment that is physically and psychologically safe for myself and others:
 - I will not use profanity.
 - I will not smoke. If as an adult I am already a user of tobacco, I will not smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of minors or at-risk adults.
 - I will not purchase tobacco for or distribute tobacco products to anyone.
 - I will not purchase alcohol for or distribute alcohol to anyone. Of course the celebration of communion is our exception.
 - I will not bring or use or distribute or purchase for others marijuana or illegal drugs.
 - I will not share nor give to another my authorized, prescribed drugs or over-the-counter medications, nor will I receive these from others
 - I will not steal.

