

Dear Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to LCI!

At LCI, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for LCI volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

LCI

Lutheran Church of the Incarnation (LCI)

Policies & Procedures for

Children's Ministries

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Overview of the LCI Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, LCI requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

LCI policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the LCI Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip LCI staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, LCI requires all staff members and volunteers to complete proper training. LCI will send you by email the link to the online training. LCI will keep records for staff and volunteers' compliance. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the LCI Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
- complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- a volunteer must attend LCI for six months before being eligible to serve in volunteer positions providing access to children, minors or vulnerable populations.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

LCI requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or youth activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of the background check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually oriented or sex-related crimes **will not serve** in any area providing services to children, minors or vulnerable populations. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving children, minors or vulnerable populations.

Child Safety Policy

DEFINITION OF “CHILD”

This policy refers to the safety of all children under the age of 18 years old. Throughout this policy there are sections specific to children in groups: infants and toddlers; children in elementary school grades 1-6; middle school aged youth (grades 7 and 8); and high school aged youth (grades 9-12).

Also covered in this policy are people of any age in vulnerable populations.

ABUSE TOLERANCE

LCI has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at LCI to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to the Pastor, Youth Director, and Council President.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

LCI is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Pastor, Youth Director, and Council President and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to the Pastor, Youth Director, and Council President. Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report ‘grooming’ behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Pastor, Youth Director, and Council President.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

LCI staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all LCI policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from a position in Children’s Ministries – for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the LCI Council.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, LCI staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the Pastor, Youth Director, and Council President.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in LCI Children's Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, minors or vulnerable populations at LCI. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from LCI.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination (employee) or removal (volunteer). Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act will be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, minors or vulnerable populations at LCI.

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

LCI is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services or criminal law enforcement.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible that a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Please report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Pastor, Youth Director, and Council President, such that the church may take appropriate action to safeguard children in the program.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to California Child Protective Services (CPS).

**Child Abuse Reporting Telephone Numbers for Yolo County:
(530)-669-2345 or (530)-669-2346 and after hours (888)-400-0022.**

Because many adults are unfamiliar with California reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, LCI utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when a LCI supervisor reports the suspicion or allegation *together* with the individual who saw, heard, or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

THIS PRACTICE IS NOT REQUIRED OR INTENDED TO INHIBIT ANY STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER FROM DIRECTLY REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AND/OR CPS AT THE NUMBERS ABOVE. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone.

NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from LCI before reporting to law enforcement personnel or Child Protective Services.

While not required by state law, please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect (or any inappropriate or 'grooming' behaviors of a colleague or coworker) to the LCI Pastor or Youth Director or a member of the LCI Safety Committee (see next page). This request is intended to assist the church in properly protecting children involved in LCI programs.

Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, LCI will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet at minimum twice per year.

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable LCI Children's Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

- the Council President
- the Pastor
- the Youth Director
- Chair of the Learning Committee
- other church members as designated

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing LCI policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the LCI Church Council regarding safety issues.

Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

BUILDING SAFETY

Every ministry supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during programming serving children. This includes unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children. No child will ever be left unattended in a ministry area or on a playground during regular programming, classes or activities.

SUPERVISION

Only parents, screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, a ministry supervisor or security team member should be notified immediately.

Two trained, screened adults should supervise children at all times.

Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of children, another volunteer or employee must be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed.

If two individuals serving in a room are related to one another, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member should be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you.

After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

PLAYGROUNDS

On the playground, remember to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

Child Safety Measures

STAFF OR VOLUNTEER TO CHILD RATIOS

LCI is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following ratios* will be observed:

Program	Staff/Volunteer	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 & 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 & 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
VBS	2	20

****The above ratios are MinistrySafe minimum recommendations.
Where supervision is concerned, more is generally better.***

If a staff member or volunteer is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the Youth Director and Learning Committee Chair. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitutes to immediately bring staff/volunteer to child ratios into compliance with Church policy.

CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

LCI has a check-in procedure requiring the parent or guardian to complete information in writing on the sign-in sheet. Volunteers must check the sign-in sheet to verify it is the expected parent or guardian picking up the child before releasing a child at pick up. Parents of children over age 8 can opt to sign a form that allows the child(ren) to check themselves out of Sunday School, to find their parent on site independently.

If there is a question of the identity of the parent or guardian asking to pick up a child, proper identification must be shown to a staff member before the child is released. (Have the child stay in the classroom; the parent may pick up the child once cleared.)

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to LCI staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact Learning Committee Chair or the Youth Director before releasing the child.

Disciplinary Policies

DISCIPLINE

It is LCI's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. When a child is misbehaving, follow these steps:

1. Go to the child and calmly ask him or her to stop the behavior. (Most children respond immediately and correct the behavior.) Give a warning and remind the child of class expectations, and redirect to a positive behavior. Do this individually when possible, try not to single out a specific child in a large group setting. Note: When working with younger children, some physical redirection may be necessary: for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child who is hitting another, or blocking a child from hitting or injuring another child.
2. If the child repeats the action, guide them to a quiet place – separate from the other children – for a short but designated period of time. Stay within sight of others and avoid being alone (or unseen) with the child.

Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the separation, and a clear explanation of your expectations.

("Terry, you didn't stop hitting Kelly when I asked you to, so it was necessary for me to separate you from the group.")

3. After a third time, refer to a staff member. A staff member may inform the parent or guardian, who may be asked to become involved in redirecting misbehavior.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to a ministry supervisor.

NEVER...

- Never yell at a child.
- Never grab a child.
- Never threaten a child. Always follow through with your word.
- Never hit a child.
- Never confront a parent in front of others.
- Never openly humiliate a child in front of the class.

BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in LCI ministry programs. At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your ministry supervisor. There is no “harmless put-down” where bullying is concerned.

1. *First Offense:* Issue a warning to the child and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is wrong. Try not to embarrass or chastise.
2. *Second Offense:* Guide the offending child(ren) from the group (in a seen or supervised location) and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals. Let the child know that the next step is communication with a pastor and the child’s parents. Notify an immediate supervisor of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.

Privately, but with another adult present, confirm that a child who was the target of the bullying behaviors is not in danger of continued harassment and is physically and emotionally stable. **DO NOT SINGLE A CHILD OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP ...** be discreet.

3. *Third Offense:* Send the offending child(ren) to a pastor or ministry supervisor for a phone call (or communication onsite) with his or her parent(s) and possible removal from the activity or event.

Restroom Policies

When children are escorted to the restroom by staff and volunteers, children will only use the restroom with a single toilet in it. The adults will confirm the restroom is empty, then allow one child at a time to use the restroom and wait for the child outside the restroom.

NURSERY CHILDREN

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- Only trained staff or the child’s parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery staff.
- Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration cards (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”)

- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only trained nursery staff or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children.
- When nursery children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available from LCI in the children's area if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

GRADES K-12

When children are escorted to the restroom by staff and volunteers, children will only use the restroom with a single toilet in it. The adults will confirm the restroom is empty, then allow one child at a time to use the restroom and wait for the child outside the restroom.

If an adult believes a child needs assistance in the restroom, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. Do not enter the restroom.

If a child requires additional assistance, find the child's parent to assist the child. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

If restroom use is required:

- Only *trained adult* staff or volunteers will accompany children to the restroom unless a parent is assisting their own child.
- Only one child in the restroom at a time, in a single toilet facility.
- In general, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Encourage children to do all they can for themselves.

- As is expected in other school settings, children in Kindergarten through 12th grades may go into the single toilet restroom alone.
- Be aware if a student repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a parent or supervisor if it occurs.
- A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone child into the restroom and be in the restroom with the door closed.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of individuals with special needs. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom, a special needs volunteer may assist them in the restroom.

Medication

Do not administer medication of any kind to any child while serving in ministry programs, including 'over the counter' drugs.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when staff or volunteers are involved in the transportation of children:

- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving vehicles for LCI activities unless in an emergency.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive LCI owned or rented vehicles.

Verbal Interactions with Children

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. LCI staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

One-to-One Interactions with Children

If a one-to-one meeting with a child is needed, staff members and volunteers must meet with the child in places where they can be observed by another adult. Unobserved meetings or interaction with children must not occur while participating in LCI Children's Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the LCI application and screening process should always be present.

Physical Contact

LCI is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, LCI has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

- Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a ministry supervisor.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to the Pastor, Youth Director or Council President.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or any illegal drugs while in any LCI facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

Tobacco Use

LCI requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during LCI activities or programs. LCI is a tobacco-free facility.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

Sexually Oriented Material

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries at LCI are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers in LCI's Children's Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e., changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), a staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the LCI Safety Committee concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

Parental Involvement

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of LCI staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at LCI. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at LCI will be required to complete the LCI volunteer application and screening process.

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to the Ministry Supervisor.

I have received and read a copy of LCI's Children's Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at LCI.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by LCI.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at LCI at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and LCI. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I acknowledge receipt of LCI policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member's or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member's or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____