

**HOLY LOVE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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# **SAFE HAVEN GUIDELINES**

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Holy Love Evangelical Lutheran Church  
**Safe Haven Guidelines**

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## **HOLY LOVE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

### **Mission Statement**

Holy Love Evangelical Lutheran Church is committed to proclaiming and living the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ as we gather for worship and study and scatter for witness and service to our neighbors.

### **Guiding Principles**

1. Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.
2. All are welcome, and all have gifts to offer.
3. We pray, listen, and follow where the Holy Spirits leads.
4. We strive to be leaders in our communities by sharing gifts and serving others.
5. We worship, fellowship, and grow in faith together.
6. We strive to be stewards of creation.

### **Purpose of Safe Haven Guidelines**

The purpose of these Guidelines is to ensure the safety of all God's children, youth, adults, and everyone that participates in activities at Holy Love Lutheran Church. We do not implement these policies out of any lack of trust in workers, employees, or volunteers; rather our intent is to protect our children, community, and congregation, and to do everything we can to maintain the safety of everyone who enters our Church.

### **Objective of Safe Haven Guidelines**

In creating these guidelines Holy Love hopes to:

- Provide a safe environment for children and youth that participate in church activities.
- Promote healthy and safe relationships between all individuals participating in church activities.
- Eliminate abuse, bullying, and harmful behavior of any kind.
- Assist to provide clarity with reporting procedures of unsafe conditions such as, but not limited to, abuse, bullying, and inappropriate behaviors.
- Help enforce and comply with all regulations and laws associated with safety and the wellbeing of children and youth.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Child:** any individual who is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger.

**Youth:** any individual who is entering into the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but who has not finished high school (12<sup>th</sup> grade).

**Leader:** any Individual(s) directly responsible for supervising and overseeing a specific church-related function, event, or activity.

**Adult:** any individual who has finished high school or who is 18 years or older.

**Volunteer:** any individual who offers him or herself to assist with a church-related activity involving children or youth.

**Church Staff:** Rostered Leadership and paid personnel at Holy Love Lutheran Church.

**Abuse:** Intentional mental or physical harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of an individual.

**Emotional Abuse:** Verbal or nonverbal violence toward a child, youth, or adult that gives them the message that they are “not good” and never will be.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child, youth, or adult.

**Sexual Abuse or Sexual Molestation:** Any sexual contact with a child or youth by an adult or an older youth. These acts may range from the touching of the penis, vagina, buttocks, or breast/chest area to sexual intercourse. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child, or youth.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.

**Bullying:** Bullying is when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose. Bullying also can happen on-line or electronically. Cyber bullying is when children or teens bully each other using the Internet, mobile phones, or other cyber technology.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS**

- Leaders and volunteers understand that Holy Love Lutheran Church will not tolerate abuse of children and/or youth, and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.
- Leaders and volunteers agree to not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Leaders and volunteers will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration, and equal treatment regardless of sex, gender, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, culture, or socioeconomic status.
- Leaders and volunteers should serve as positive role models for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They should avoid even the appearance of favoritism or impropriety.
- In the event that leaders and volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, leaders and volunteers agree to report their observations to the church staff.
- Leaders and volunteers are not permitted to use, or to be under the influence of, alcohol and/or drugs that are illegal under federal or state statute (including marijuana) when participating in a children or youth activity.
- All leaders and volunteers acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth, and understand there may be legal requirements to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church staff and state authorities in accordance with these policies.

## **SCREENING AND SELECTION**

1. All leaders and volunteers who work with Children and/or Youth are required to sign a form authorizing the release of information to conduct a background check.
  - A background check will be conducted on all leaders and volunteers who supervise children and/or youth at a church-related function or event.
  - Background checks will be updated every three (3) years.
2. Adults who have not had a background check conducted may supervise their own child(ren) at a children or youth specific event.
  - Adults who have not had a background check conducted may interact with other children as long as the event is under the supervision of an adult Leader who has had a background check conducted.
  - Adults who regularly participate in children or youth specific events are expected to submit to the entire Safe Haven process for volunteers (background check, Code of Conduct form, training, etc.).
  - Supervision ratios include only leaders and volunteers for whom a background check has been conducted.
3. All leaders and volunteers who work with children and/or youth are required to sign the Code of Conduct form.

4. Individual interviews with the applicant will be conducted by the congregational council's designee before the applicant is permitted to work with children or youth.
5. An individual is required to be an adult in order to drive any vehicle carrying children or youth on an official congregational activity. All adults who drive any vehicle carrying children or youth, other than their own children or youth, on an official congregational activity are required to have the following documents in a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept: their current driving history or motor vehicle record, a copy of their current automobile insurance, and a copy of their valid driver's license.
6. All leaders and volunteers are required to go through a training session conducted by the congregational council's designee.

All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated by the congregational council's designee to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether or not it is appropriate for the applicant to work with children or youth. Adults who work with or around children or youth should have a personnel file that is kept where other church records are kept.

**New Members:** Every leader should be a member of Holy Love Evangelical Lutheran Church for a minimum of six months, and preferably one year; Holy Love Lutheran Church Preschool Staff; and/or an ELCA-approved camp staff before working with children and youth. Individuals who have not been members for at least six month or people who are not members may serve as volunteers at the discretion of and after an interview with the pastor. This interview is to precede having a background check conducted.

### **MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS**

1. All leaders of children and youth activities on- or off-site are to attempt to maintain the following ratios:
  - A ratio of 1:8 should be maintained when supervising children (5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger). Adults of either or both genders are acceptable.
  - A ratio of 1:8 should be maintained when supervising youth (6<sup>th</sup> grade – 12<sup>th</sup> grade) during on-site, overnight, and/or off-site youth activities. When both boys and girls are participating, adult male and adult female presence is preferred.
2. If Leaders and/or Volunteers are unable to maintain the appropriate ratio, all doors of the classroom are required to be open for other adults to be able to observe.
3. Leaders and/or volunteers should not be alone with a child or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them. One-to-one conversations with children or youth should be held in public, or open areas where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.

4. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering, or diapering infants or children, the leader and/or volunteer should remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
5. At least two unrelated (non-family members) volunteers and/or leaders are required to supervise activities.
6. Children and Youth are required to submit a signed parental permission form in order to participate in Children- or Youth-specific activities at Holy Love where their parent or guardian is not present. If permission is unobtainable, a Child or Youth may participate in only one activity without having a signed parental permission form; before their second activity, permission forms should be on file.
7. A leader or volunteer must be at least 2 years older than the age of the oldest child or youth that is present at the event.
8. Drugs that are illegal under federal or state statute (including marijuana) and/or alcohol are not permitted at church organized activities which cater specifically to children and youth. Wine can be administered only for communion during children and youth specific events.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

When a Leader or Volunteer “friends” or “follows” a child or youth, under the age of 18, on any form of social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.), a Leader or Volunteer should contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth. Examples of this communication are:

*“I would like to request to be your child’s friend on Facebook. I prefer “friending” both youth and their parents as part of my practice to promote transparency and appropriate adult-youth relationships.”*

*“Your child has requested that I follow them on Instagram. If you like, you may follow me at <id>”*

**Groups/ Pages** – All Holy Love social media pages or groups are monitored regularly by a screened volunteer or Church Staff.

## **POLICY REGARDING REPORTING OF KNOWN OR SUSPECTED ABUSE, INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND/OR POLICY VIOLATIONS**

### **Action Plan for Known or Suspected Abuse:**

All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

1. Do not ask children or youth probing questions about the abuse. Just listen.
2. Document your concerns or what you learned about the abuse.
3. Share concerns about abuse with authorized church staff, an executive council member, and/or legal authorities as may be appropriate.

4. Volunteers and church staff may be legally required to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the appropriate state authorities. Volunteers and church staff who have a duty to report should contact legal counsel for advice if they are in doubt or not sure whether to report. The church will pay for such consultation. Report confirmed and/or suspected abuse to legal authorities. Any volunteer who is required to report child abuse or neglect due to their non-church-related positions shall make an individual determination as to whether to report suspected or known abuse.
5. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth may be a crime. Colorado immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice. Simply stated, "in good faith" means that the person submitting the report believes what he or she is reporting to be true.
6. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, leaders and volunteers are to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by leaders or volunteers directly to the pastor, church staff, or council president so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.
7. Reports of suspected or known abuse that involve rostered church staff should be reported to the Bishop or Assistants to the Bishop through a telephone call or meeting.

**Reporting Inappropriate Behavior or Policy Violations:**

When leaders and volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with this policy, they should promptly report their observations by a telephone call, email, or meeting to the following:

- a. The immediate supervisor of that person and/or
- b. The pastor or other leader in authority and/or
- c. The church council president, organizational or agency board president and/or
- d. The Synod Bishop or an Assistant to the Bishop