

Trinity Lutheran Downtown Youth Ministries Safety Policy Handbook

A.INTRODUCTION

A.1 PURPOSE

As a community of faith committed to following Jesus Christ, we strive to extend a generous welcome to all who enter our doors and to treat them with the love and dignity that God bestows upon each and every one of us. We want our youth group to be safe.

Unfortunately, we cannot simply assume that our church and all our youth group activities are safe. We know that we cannot eliminate all risks, but we can strive to reach that goal by taking intentional and direct actions. DYM Michael Winckler and The Youth Ministry MAT wants Trinity's young people to be able to deepen their relationship with God and each other in an environment that is safe and secure. It is in this spirit that the Trinity Lutheran Downtown Youth Ministry Policies and Procedures were created. We consider this to be a living document which will be amended over time as new issues arise. This document's hope will be to provide guidelines to create a safer environment at Trinity Lutheran Downtown for all youth, parents, and volunteers involved.

DYM Stands for Director of Youth Ministries

What is safety?

Safety means that a person's spiritual, emotional and physical self is protected from injury. For example:

Spiritual safety

- Students have the freedom to express their faith appropriately
- Student's beliefs are treated respectfully

Emotional safety

- Kindness and civility are the norm
- People refrain from personal attacks and gossip
- Confidentiality is honored

Physical safety

- Facilities are clean and well lit
- Food preparation areas are clean and health department guidelines for food preparation are followed when food is prepared for students.
- All games and activities that may cause harm have clear instruction and are well planned/thought out.

A.2 SCOPE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The policies and procedures included in this document apply to all activities which take place within the building and properties of Trinity Lutheran Church Downtown, as well as programs, activities, or events scheduled as part of the youth ministry which take place elsewhere. The policies and procedures apply to all who participate in youth ministries including, friends, volunteers, and employees of the church.

B. BUILDING SAFETY

It is the responsibility of the DYM and volunteers to understand and maintain understanding of all building safety procedures.

B.1 GENERAL

DYM and Volunteers will:

- Know proper fire exits and how to access them
- Know where all emergency equipment and documentation is (Health records, phone numbers, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and defibrillators.)

C. SCREENING AND TRAINING

C.1 DEFINITIONS

- PMM Background Check: Protect My Ministry Background Check
- Staff or paid employee: Any individual hired and compensated by Trinity Lutheran Downtown on a part-time, full-time, permanent or temporary basis.

C.2 VOLUNTEER SCREENING

- Trinity Lutheran Downtown Youth Ministries welcomes volunteers to become involved in the programs offered as part of Youth Ministries. For those volunteers who work with youth and children on a regular basis, volunteers should generally be at least five years older than the youth or children they work with and have been part of the church community for six months, subject to the discretion of the Director of Youth Ministries and Church staff.

C.3 CRIMINAL BACKGROUND VERIFICATION

Trinity Lutheran Church uses Protect My Ministry Background Checks.

- Trinity Youth Ministry's Church requires PMM Check on:
 - All prospective youth ministry volunteers that will be spending extended periods of time with the youth.
 - Anyone convicted of any felony or a felony default by the court, with child or elder abuse, whether physical, emotional, or sexual, will not be considered, under any circumstances, for a position with Trinity Youth Ministries.
 - For anyone that does not come up "clear" on the background check all attempts will be made to maintain confidentiality.
 - The Director of Youth Ministries may consult with Trinity's leadership and an attorney retained by the Church regarding background check findings and reports.

C4. TRAINING

All Youth Ministry Volunteers who work with youth and children will receive training on safe church policies and procedures. They will sign a Safety Covenant which will be kept on file with the Director of Youth Ministries. Each will be given a copy of the Policy handbook and Safety Covenant to review and given an opportunity to ask questions. Those individuals who have regular, direct contact with youth will also receive education about child abuse awareness and reporting procedures.

Training procedures:

- Training sessions will be offered to all volunteers incorporated with youth ministries
- DYM will keep a record of all who has received training.
- Training will include a review of the Trinity Downtown Youth Ministries Safety Policies Handbook

D. YOUTH MINISTRY PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

D.1 YOUTH MINISTRY PROCEDURES

1. TWO ADULT POLICY

- a. The Two Adult Policy is intended to protect youth and prevent adults from encountering a situation where they could be wrongfully accused. Therefore, no adult should be alone in the church, or be at a church-approved activity, with a youth that is not related to him or her. It is recommended that there be a ratio of one adult for every six youths at all youth programs or activities. If these ratios are unable to be met, the youth activity may be canceled at the discretion of the minister or lay leader.
- b. At least two chaperones should wait with youth being picked up after an offsite event.

In the event that an adult is alone with a youth waiting to be picked up, they should wait in a public space.

- c. It is permissible to have one adult per car carrying youth to an off-site event, but at no time should an adult be alone with a child other than his/her own. Two children and one adult in a vehicle is appropriate.

2. PERMISSION, MEDICAL, AND COVENANT FORMS

- a. All Youth participating in youth programs must have a Medical and Liability form completed and on file. These forms will be kept on file for one year with the church. Completed forms will be brought on all youth off site events by the adult leader.

3. OFF-SITE EVENT GUIDELINES

- a. Parents or guardians and participating youth shall be given information ahead of time about programs, activities, leaders, chaperones, dates, times, cost, method of transportation, purpose of the scheduled trip or activity and other details whenever possible.
- b. All occupants of a vehicle must use an individual seat belt (no multiple belting) at all times during the operation of the vehicle.
- c. No cell phone use while driving except for a true emergency, and then the driver is encouraged to pull off the roadway to a safe spot.
- d. Appropriate supervision: The two adult policies and procedures applies for all church events including those held off-site. On an overnight trip there will be at least one male and one female chaperone.

4. DISCIPLINE

- a. All participants are expected to act in a respectful manner toward all others participating in a youth group function. Participants are expected to follow the rules developed with the DYM. The purpose of discipline is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect and cooperation.
- b. No youth will be disciplined by use of any form of physical punishment. Mutual respect in communication between youth and leaders, teachers and chaperones is expected.
- c. Appropriate behavioral expectations will be clearly communicated. Disruptive, disrespectful or dangerous behavior will be addressed by the leader, teacher or chaperone in charge.
- d. If this behavior occurs on a trip or at a meeting, the leader reserves the right to contact the parent/guardian and send the youth home at the parents/guardians expense.
- e. Adult volunteers must report all infractions of youth rules to the minister or adult leader of the group.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a. A first aid kit will be readily available in all youth programming.
- b. Fire safety information, emergency evacuation routes and meeting place will be clearly posted in every classroom, along with emergency numbers for the church, police and fire departments.
- c. Emergency procedures, including evacuation plans, will be reviewed at each teacher orientation. Incident Reports Forms can be found in the DYM office Forms written out filled and given to the parents if warranted. If there is a medical emergency, the parents and the minister should be contacted and 911 called as warranted.
- d. The importance of hand washing before handling food and after any clean up is emphasized.

6. CONCERN FOR A YOUTH'S SAFETY OUTSIDE OF CHURCH

- a. If in the context of a class or other event, a youth discloses information that raises concern about his or her safety, the incident should be discussed promptly with the Church staff to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response.

E. INTERNET AND PHONE SAFETY

The internet and social media are evolving tools which offer great promise for developing and deepening ministries but also pose significant safety challenges.

E. 1 DEFINITIONS

Youth Group Sponsored Sites — any group, page or list-serve that is created by the DYM for the purpose of establishing, maintaining or growing ministries to and with youth and/or adults.

Inappropriate Content — refers both to content that is improper or offensive, but also content that might be suited to the medium but not to the relationship.

E.2 MINOR TO ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. When and where available, adults may choose to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
3. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth that are associated with Trinity Youth Ministries, we recommend that other adults within Trinity Youth Ministries have full access to the correspondent's profile and correspondence.

4. Adults who choose to accept friend requests from youth should use all privacy settings applicable to shield youth from any inappropriate content that may exist within the adult's profile.
5. All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means (email, social networking site notes or posts, texts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others.
6. Adults should archive or save all email correspondence with youth.
7. We strongly recommend "closed" but not "hidden" groups be used for Trinity Youth Ministries. These groups should have both youth and adult administrators.
8. Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to use church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
9. Covenants should be created to govern what is appropriate and inappropriate content to be placed and displayed in the online group for Trinity Youth Ministries.
10. Any inappropriate material that is not covered by "Mandatory Reporting" laws should be deleted from the site. Any material that is covered by "Mandatory Reporting" laws should be reported to the DYM, documented for church records, and then deleted from the site.
11. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adults.
12. Adult leaders are not responsible for internet youth pages that are not sponsored by Trinity Youth Ministries.

E. 3 YOUTH AND USE OF PHONE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Youth should only use their phones during any youth programming for emergencies or as directed by a leader.
2. Without permission of an adult leader youth will not be allowed to take pictures of anyone at anytime during any youth event.
3. Youth will be expected to treat all others with respect, being aware of all forms of safety, on all social media platforms, texting, and messaging platforms. During all youth activities.

E.4 COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT

1. TRANSITIONS
 - a. Former youth members and adult leaders Trinity Youth Ministries, due to departure, removal or loss of eligibility (aged out of a program) should be removed from digital communication youth groups (Facebook groups, list serves, etc.)
2. VIDEO CHATS, BLOGS OR VIDEO BLOGS
 - a. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
 - b. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.

- c. All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
 - d. All youth leaders should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth because it might be perceived as the voice of the church, and may be misconstrued as church policies and procedures.
3. PUBLISHING/POSTING CONTENT ONLINE
- a. Secure signed Media Release forms from parents/guardians of minors who may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
 - b. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for individuals unless otherwise requested.