

FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH SAFE HAVEN POLICY

The Safe Haven Policy was developed to assist First English Lutheran Church (FELC), ELCA, 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 Parish Education, Youth, and Wage and Policy Committees along with the Pastor are ultimately responsible for the supervision of all youth organizations and visitation ministries of this congregation. Adaptations and deviations to these policies and procedures are acceptable with the approval of the Wage and Policy Committee and the Church Council.

The words "children" and "youth" as well as "activity," "event," 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.

The words "chaperone, adults, staff, teacher, volunteer and youth leader" are used interchangeably and are referred to individuals who are supervising, teaching, mentoring, or leading the youth of FELC.

a. GENERAL RULES

1) **Staff, Youth Leaders, Teachers, Chaperones, and Volunteers:** All staff, teachers, youth leaders, chaperones, and/or volunteers working with children and at-risk adults at FELC shall read and abide by this Safe Haven Policy and sign the Safe Haven Covenant. Additional covenants may be required on special activities.

2) **Requirements:** Before becoming an adult chaperone, staff, teacher, youth leader, and/or volunteer, an individual must be an active member of FELC for at least six months and complete a background check.

3) **Background Checks:**

- a. All staff, youth leaders, teachers, chaperones and/or volunteers over age 18 who are 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.
- b. Re-screening shall be done every five years unless otherwise warranted.
- c. The Parish Education Committee will collect the completed background check form for a new candidate or a candidate that has to be renewed. The form will then be submitted to the Wage and Policy Committee.
- d. The Wage and Policy Committee will submit the background check form to a qualified screening company.
- e. The Wage and Policy Committee will review the results and shred the background form and results.
- f. The Wage and Policy Committee will present a list of the approved names to the Church Council for confirmation.
- g. The Parish Education Committee will be responsible of maintaining a list of the individuals who have had a background check completed and the renewal date the next background check is required.

4) **Parent/Guardian Permission:** A Release and Consent Form will be signed by a parent/guardian at the beginning of the Sunday School program year to grant permission for the youth to attend church sponsored events held at church, not held on church property, held overnight, and where transportation is provided. If at any time the information on the form needs to be changed, the Release and Consent Form should be updated. The Release and Consent will be kept in the church office and in the possession of the youth leader.

5) **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 a member of the Wage and Policy Committee. Members of the church council and other recognized church leaders, staff or volunteers are required by law to report any cases of abuse to Marathon County Social Services and/or the local law enforcement agency.

6) **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. An adult volunteer must be present during nursery. If an adult is not present, nursery will be cancelled.

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- 7) **Classrooms:** Window should not be covered at any time. The doors will remain open in rooms where there are no internal windows in the room.
- 8) **Illegal Activity:** Volunteers, staff, chaperones, teachers, and/or youth leaders should never use or provide alcohol, drugs, pornography, or tobacco to a young person. Not only would it be immoral, but illegal and result in prosecution.
- 9) **Two Adults Rule:**
- A minimum of two adults must be present at all church sponsored youth/children/at-risk adult activities and ministry programs except during Sunday School, confirmation classes, and church visitations.
 - For youth activities, it is *preferable* that one of the adult chaperones be the parent of a participating youth.
 - Adult chaperones will be at least 21 years of age and should be a minimum of five years older than the youth participating.
 - Sunday School teachers may be under 18 years old but must be a confirmed member of the church.
- 10) **Overnights 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.
 - Adult rooms should be in close proximity to youth rooms for supervision purposes only.
 - If there are boys and girls attending the overnight, both a male and female adult will be 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 one female adults present.)
 - If the youth requires adult care, a parent or adult care provider must accompany the youth.
- 11) **Medication:** Medication of any kind should not be administered to youth without checking the Parental Consent and Release Form granting permission.
- 12) **Adult Supervision:**
- Staff, chaperones, youth leaders, teachers, and/or volunteers should know where the youth they are supervising are at all times. Before going off, a youth should notify the adult supervisor as to where he/she is going, with whom, and when he/she will return.
 - On trips, chaperones should assess any situation or environment and determine how safe or unsafe an environment might be before making rules about the level of supervision is required to keep the youth safe. For example, while it would be Ok to allow youth to go off in groups at a contained amusement park, it might not be prudent to allow the same while participating in a work camp at some inner city, high crime area.
 - On trips, never allow a young person to go off alone. Require young people to go in groups and require regular check in times with adults.
- 13) **Driving:**
- Drivers for all church sponsored activities shall be over 21, have a valid driver's license, and carry their own motor vehicle insurance.
 - Drivers using their own vehicles shall ensure that the vehicle meets all operational requirements and have all required safety equipment mandated by the Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Code.
 - Drivers using their own vehicles must provide proof of insurance to the church office. A copy of proof of insurance will be kept on file in the church office.
 - On trips, it is unacceptable for minors (under 18 years old) to drive other youth to an event while under the supervision of a FELC chaperone.
 - For long distance trips, i.e. National Gathering or Synod events, it is highly recommended that FELC youth join with other church youth groups who are taking a bus or van for transportation. If a personal vehicle is going to be used to transport youth for such events, approval from the Church Council must be granted.
- 14) **Rules:** All rules should be enforced fairly and consistently.

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15) **Discipline:** Physical punishment will not be administered to anyone participating in a church sponsored activity. If physical contact is necessary to restrain someone, 911 should be called.

16) **Touch and Interactions:** Touching should always respond to the needs of the recipient and not to the needs of the giver. Sexual contact in any form is not permitted. Below are the guidelines regarding appropriate actions:

- a. Love, support and affection are part of church life and ministry. The following are considered appropriate ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries:
 - Brief hugs, pats on the back or shoulder
 - Handshakes
 - "High fives", "knuckles", and hand slapping
 - Verbal praise
 - Touching hands, 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
- b. The following actions are considered to be inappropriate and are not allowed:
 - Full body hugs, lengthy embraces, and/or kissing
 - 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 or locked** areas, e.g. closets, offices, bathrooms, staff only areas, other private rooms, or vehicles.
 - Occupying a bed or sleeping bag with a child/youth/non-spousal at-risk adult
 - Caressing knees or legs
 - Wrestling
 - Tickling
 - 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. For example: "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 individual
 - Private meals in non-public venues

17) **Training:** The FELC Parish Education Committee will provide Safe Haven training in August before Sunday School begins and again in January if new volunteers and staff come on board. This training is required for all staff, chaperones, teachers, youth leaders, teachers, and volunteers who regularly supervise or participate in FELC activities of young people and/or at-risk adults.

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SAFE HAVEN COVENANT STATEMENT

First English Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church.

In keeping with the covenant of Baptism, we have committed ourselves and our resources to the nurturing of our youth. We understand that children cannot grow in faith and in wisdom when they are frightened, distrustful, anxious, or depressed. They cannot learn to love and trust God when those who represent God to them are unloving and untrustworthy.

As a volunteer working with children in this congregation, I agree to observe and abide by all church policies and to conduct myself in accordance with the principles named in the Safe Haven Policy and will participate in training and education events provided by the church related to my volunteer assignment and report promptly accidents, behavior incidents, and suspected child abuse or neglect to the church staff members who supervise my work, a Church Council member, Wage and Policy Committee member, or the Pastor.

Signature of Volunteer: _____ Print Name: _____

Date: _____

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AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION TO FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH

First English Lutheran Church (FELC) conducts criminal background checks as a condition of employment and for individuals working with youth. The background check includes a review of any pending charges or convictions. I hereby authorize FELC to conduct a criminal background check. In connection with this consent, I authorize the use of law enforcement agencies and/or private background check organizations to assist FELC in collecting this information. I hereby authorize and request any present or former employer, school, police department, financial institution or other person having personal knowledge of me to furnish FELC or its designated agents with any and all information in their possession regarding me in connection with a requested appointment of employment. I authorize that a photocopy of this authorization be accepted with the same authority as the original.

I am aware that any personally identifiable information requested (e.g. gender, date of birth, etc.) is for the sole purpose of accurately gathering the information needed for the criminal background check and will to be used not unlawfully discriminate against me.

I also am aware that records of arrests or pending charges and/or convictions are not an absolute bar to appointment as an employee. Such information will be used to determine if there is a substantial relationship between the circumstances of the pending charge and/or conviction and the employment assignment for which I am being considered.

I release to FELC and its agents, officials, representatives or assigned agencies including officers, employees or related personnel, both individually and collectively from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind, which may anytime result to me, my heirs, family or associates because of compliance with this authorization and request to release.

GENERAL INFORMATION			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	
Other Names you have used*	Date of Birth Mo/Day/Year	Gender __ Male __ Female	
Current Address	City	State and Zip	
Email Address	Telephone Area Code/No.	Social Security Number*	
Driver's License Number	State Issued:		
<p>Have you ever been convicted of a crime or have you any pending criminal charges against you? This refers only to felonies and misdemeanors. You do not need to include noncriminal violations or municipal ordinance violations. If you are unsure whether the charge is criminal or noncriminal, disclose it. __ No __ Yes Provide details:</p>			
SIGNATURE			
<p>I CERTIFY, to the best of my knowledge, that the information provided herein is true and complete. I understand that any falsification or omission may disqualify me for this position.</p>			
Signature of Applicant			Date
DETAILS			
<p>Indicate nature, date(s), court case number, county, and state or as much information as possible, of conviction(s) and/or pending charges.</p>			
Charge or Conviction	Date	Court Case Number	County & State

*This information is needed to verify the accuracy of the information received from law enforcement agencies.