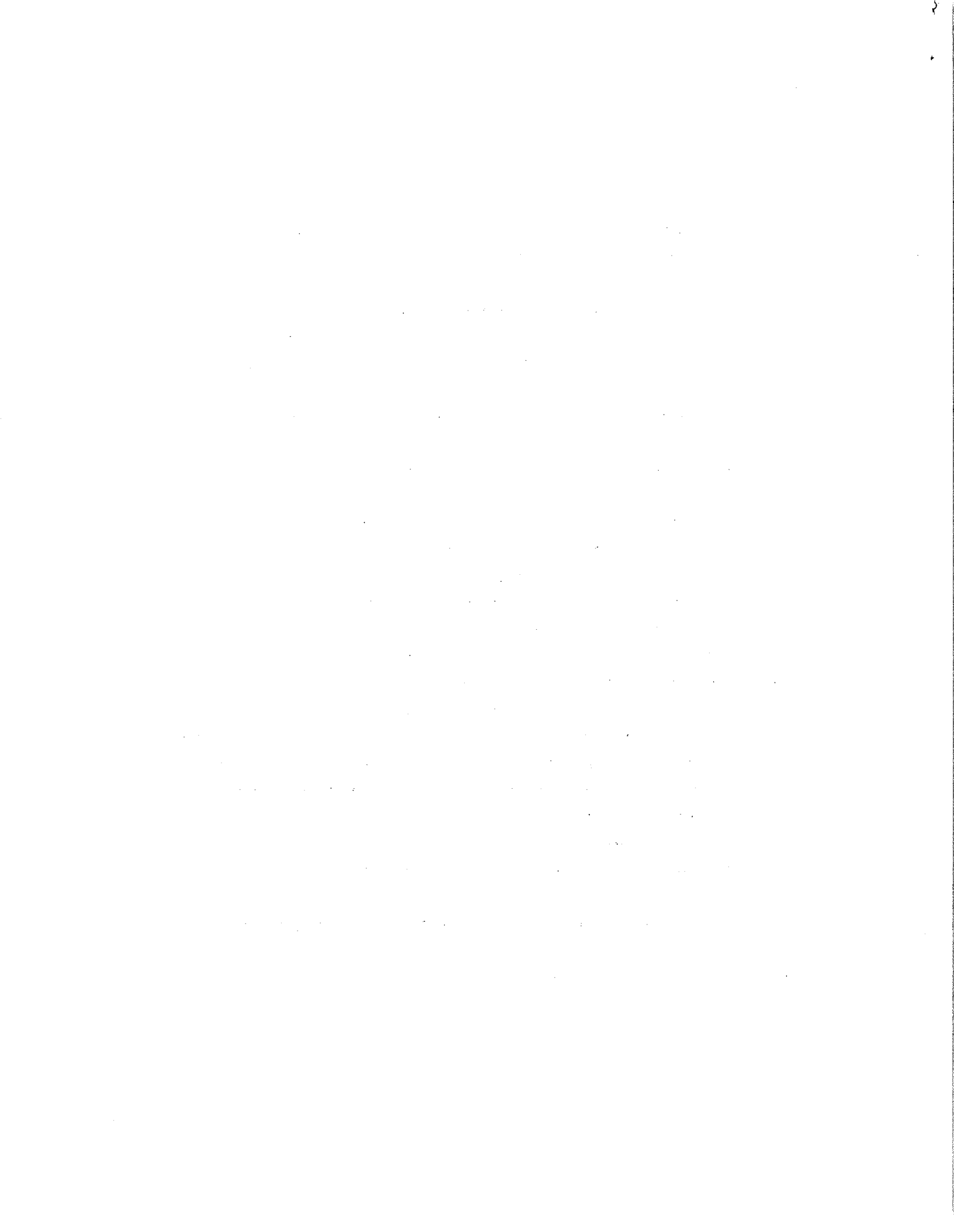


Guidelines for Safe Church Policies

Some ideas on what to include:

1. A forward reason for the policy- including what you want to accomplish e.g. preventing situations that may invite child abuse or neglect.
2. An introduction- Biblical/theological with possible Biblical quotes.
3. What does the policy cover? Which groups of people will be included- consider all of the programs which serve children and youth.
4. Who is in charge of policy and who will administer, keep the documentation.
5. Definitions- e.g. abuse, neglect, minors, etc. be specific and limit the number
6. Reporting mandates according to CPS that includes report to insurance companies, and synod office.
7. Criminal Background checks and child abuse checks.
8. Rules for the supervision of children – What are your rules and conditions? - e.g. 2 adult rule.
9. Training required for staff and volunteers.
10. Electronic Communication- computer, texting and social sites
11. Worshipping sex offenders, covenant agreements
12. Separate documents- applications, release for background check, release for medical issues, youth activities, overnights, driving record check, special information for friends of participants, protection orders.
13. Updating older policies and training materials
14. Sharing policy with insurance company and congregational lawyer.
15. After enacting the policy, remember to follow the policy in making decisions.

Note: See ELCA.org/safe place or safe haven



Indicators of Child Abuse

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
2. Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and property
4. Inexplicable physical injuries, repetitious injuries

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

1. Exhibits withdrawal behavior
2. Failure to thrive
3. Threats or attempts suicide
4. Extreme attempts to seek adult behavior
5. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns

Possible Signs of Neglect

1. Failure to thrive
2. Inappropriate dress for climate
3. Steals food
4. Depression
5. Untreated medical conditions
6. Poor hygiene

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and development
2. Sexually reactive behavior
3. Clingy-won't separate from one adult to another
4. Runs away from home
5. Physical symptoms, headaches, stomach aches, fatigue
6. Sexually transmitted diseases

Scenarios for Safe Church

1. You are a pastor, counselor, youth worker, or parish nurse and a child or teen discloses to you abuse by a parent. Outline your steps for handling this situation. Also what would you do if the accused person were a volunteer at your youth activities?
2. You are part of the paid church staff, rostered or not, you learn from a member of the church council that the pastor's computer contains a history of excessive pornography. What do you do now? What would you do if the person reporting this was an adolescent?
3. You are the pastor. A member of the church comes to you, quite upset, saying a registered sex offender is attending the church. The member brings web site proof of this but you have no knowledge of this issue. What do you say and do next?
4. You are the chair person of your social action team committee. Several adults and teens in your congregation are planning an out of town work trip to rebuild a damaged church. Another church will be housing the group. What are some concerns you need to discuss with the church leadership? List as many possible issues you would consider.
5. You are the pastor and a relative of a female member of your present confirmation class reports that her granddaughter was sexually assaulted by an older youth in the church basement. This young man is mildly developmentally delayed. This assault has been reported to the police. What concerns do you have? What do you do? List your questions and your actions.

Guidelines for Electronic/Digital Communication and Safe Church Practices

- I. Updating present safe church policy with guidelines for electronic/digital communication as these relate to church activities.
- II. Suggested resources:
 - A. ELCA website
 - B. Safe Sanctuaries – Joy Thornburg Melton
 - C. Other church resources
- III. Provide training for church staff and volunteers.
- IV. Provide a workshop for youth and parents addressing the safety issues for electronic communication – see additional handout for discussion.
- V. Church computer safety
 - A. Add internet monitoring software to computers such as Net Nanny.
 - B. Form a committee for monitoring and deciding who has access
 - C. Consider the location of the computer... Remember young people need to be protected from inappropriate internet sites. Children age eleven to seventeen are the most frequent consumers of internet pornography.

Ways to Protect Kids from On-Line Porn

- Install an internet blocking product.
 - Place the computer in a public area, such as the family room.
 - Computers aren't like television sets, don't use them as a last minute "baby sitter."
 - Set time limits on internet usage, preferably during study hours. Use their time on-line for studies, not killing time.
 - Discourage late-night use by anyone in the household. Most pornography sites are accessed late at night or very early in the morning.
 - Don't let your children talk unsupervised to anyone on-line. Chat rooms promote the anonymity of users. You have no way of knowing who is on the other end of the line. Pedophiles frequently use chat rooms as a vehicle to meet children.
 - Have them set up their own bookmarks. This provides easy access to positive sites.
 - Spend time with your kids on-line. Teach them how to use search engines.
 - Set up ground rules and then stick to them. Let your children know the consequences that will follow misuse.
 - Show your kids what to do if they accidentally stumble on to a bad site.
- D. Report any evidence of internet pornography to the committee.
 - E. For pastoral staff:
 1. Remind congregants that the church e-mail is not private. Private issues should be handled by phone or by appointment.
 2. Be careful about sharing your private e-mail address.

3. Any inappropriate e-mail from congregants should be stopped immediately by setting appropriate boundaries.

VI. Facebook, MySpace and other social sites:

- A. Once something is posted, it could be there forever.
- B. Nothing on social sites posts is really confidential.
- C. Parents should be responsible for teaching children and youth appropriate use of social sites.
- D. Church staff and volunteers can reinforce guidelines for safe social site use.

VII. Guidelines for Behavioral Covenants

- A. Covenants should say that materials posted on church sponsored sites are not confidential.
- B. Content found to be inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
- C. Covenants for communities of faith should address the following:
 1. Appropriate language.
 2. Eligibility of membership to form a church social networking group, e.g. youth member, age, etc.
 3. Loss of eligibility of membership, e.g. "age-out."
 4. Who, how, and when pictures are tagged, e.g. members can tag themselves, but not others.
 5. Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members, e.g. bullying, consequences.
 6. Compliance with mandated reporting laws.

VIII. Thoughts About Twitter

- A. To register with Twitter go to www.twitter.com
 1. Twitter followers can be added in the same way as "friending" on Facebook.
- B. You can send "tweets" from both your phone and the webpage.
 1. The only people who can view tweets are people who subscribe to your page, unless your page is not set to private.
- C. Unless you have a PDA or iPhone, you really can't browse the internet on your phone, so you would not be able to see Twitter pages.
 1. You would see a notification on a cell phone that someone commented on your post.
- D. Facebook is much more popular than Twitter. More people use Twitter to follow celebrities and breaking news.
- E. You can write whatever you please on Facebook and Twitter. Keep in mind guidelines for churches and behavioral covenants.
 1. You can report inappropriate pictures found on Facebook. There is a place to click on pictures in the margin of the page.
- F. Formspring.me is an incredibly problematic social networking site: It is a website where you make a personal page where others can post anonymous questions and statements. Extremely popular with high school age children, hurtful and inappropriate things can be posted on these pages and become a vehicle for cyber bullying.

Guidelines for churches using e-mail, texting, "sexting" and Twitter

1. These sites can be appropriate, effective ways to communicate basic factual information, i.e. time of an event, agenda for a meeting, etc.
2. E-mail is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation. If an e-mail needs to be more than a few sentences, then there should be a scheduled conversation.
3. Humor or sarcasm is easily misinterpreted on the sites. "Bullying" is a serious concern with teenagers, i.e. Phoebe from MA who suicided as the result of bullying.
4. All users of these sites should take a moment to consider the ramifications of their messages.

Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth

Social Networking Sites-Relationships

1. Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be "friends", and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with their community of faith, other adult leaders must have full access to all aspects of that adult's profile and correspondence.
3. Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to "friend" an adult can be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult's personal profile account. The purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.
4. Any material on any other site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to rostered leaders and/or Child Protective Services (CPS) or police.

Groups on Social Networking Sites

1. Closed groups, but not "hidden" groups, should be used for youth groups.
2. Groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators.
3. Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite him/her to join the group.
4. Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.

5. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the rostered leaders, CPS, and police. After referring to CPS or police, the material should be documented and removed from the site.
6. Inappropriate material that does not raise suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be removed from the site.
7. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established behavioral covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adult youth leaders and parents.
8. Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
9. Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of adult youth leaders.
10. Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they "aged-out" of a program should be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

Guidelines for Interactions with Adults

Social Networking Sites-Relationship

1. Rostered leaders are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
 2. Individual personal profiles of rostered leaders are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Rostered leaders should not submit "friend" requests to parishioners and other to whom they minister. The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.
 3. Rostered leaders who want to connect via social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends, and colleagues.
 4. Rostered leaders should consider the impact of declining a "friend" request from parishioners. These encounters may create a tension in "real world" relationships. Rostered leaders can direct "friend" requests from parishioners to the parish's group page.
 5. Rostered leaders who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
 6. When rostered leader's ministry at a parish or other ministry setting ends, the leader should remove parishioners as "friends" or contacts in all forms of digital communication.
- This handout contains adaptations from the Office of Pastoral Response the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut and *Pornography and the Search for Intimacy* in Lutheran Ministries - LCMS