

LEARNING FOR LIFE ✝ LIVING FOR CHRIST



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

August 2024

PREFACE

Volunteers represent a tremendous resource for our ministry. They can do so many things to increase the effectiveness of the school and church's programs and activities by providing assistance and services that would not normally be possible. The children entrusted to our care reap many tangible benefits from the work of volunteers. However, the intangible results of positive feelings, healthy relationships and, the life satisfaction of volunteers themselves become the most important products of a well-organized volunteer program.

Note: The use of the word, child(ren), in this handbook is used interchangeably with the word, "student(s)."

Note: The use of the word, "volunteer(s)," in this handbook should be understood to also include paid employees.

"None of us stands so tall as when we stoop to help a child."





Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to St. John Lutheran Church and School!

At SJL, we take our responsibility to educate and care for our students seriously. The guidelines found in this handbook are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which students can learn and grow.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of the policies and procedures for SJL volunteers especially as they pertain to the emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of our students. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for students by protecting them, you, and the mission of SJL. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy handbook, please go to the school website to fill out the volunteer form.

Sincerely,

Libby MacGillis

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INTRODUCTION

- A. The mission of St. John Lutheran (SJL) School is *"Shaping lives for Christian service through academic excellence."*
- B. As part of this mission, SJL will provide:
- ✓ a safe environment for all students involved in any school or church sponsored program or activity.
 - ✓ a comfortable work environment for all volunteers working with students.
- C. Objectives of SJL's Volunteer Program
- ✓ All students will be treated with courtesy, respect, and Christian love while participating in programs and activities.
 - ✓ All activities and programs will be conducted in a safe and secure environment.
 - ✓ Students will be properly supervised while participating in our programs and activities.
 - ✓ Volunteers who work with students will receive appropriate training and be better equipped to notice, respond to, and report dangerous or inappropriate situations.
 - ✓ Volunteers who work with students shall comply with SJL's current education and certification guidelines including:
 - completing a Personal Lifestyle Screening Form (annually) so that a background screening can be conducted as needed and
 - signing a statement of policy acceptance form that he/she understands and agrees to abide by SJL guidelines and policies such as those found in this handbook.
 - ✓ Volunteers will experience satisfaction from a job well done in service to our Lord.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SUPERVISION

Volunteer opportunities cover a broad spectrum of positions and scenarios requiring a variety of gifts, knowledge, skills, and experience. While it is impossible to quantify every foreseeable volunteer experience, for the purpose of the safety of students, SJL generally distinguishes volunteer positions based on having either direct or indirect supervision of students.

A pastor, the principal, or immediate administrative supervisor will make a determination as to whether the volunteer's activity involves direct or indirect contact and/or supervision of students.

- A. DIRECT CONTACT OR SUPERVISION → Those volunteers determined to potentially have direct supervision will need to comply with all components of this handbook including:
- a completed application,
 - background check consent,
 - acknowledgment of training, and
 - agreement to follow SJL guidelines and policies.

Examples of direct supervision include but are not limited to:

- ✓ childcare provider,
- ✓ Vacation Bible School teacher,
- ✓ Sunday School teacher,
- ✓ youth leader,
- ✓ trip or dance chaperone,
- ✓ teacher aide,
- ✓ lunch or recess aide,
- ✓ youth leader/chaperone,
- ✓ room parent,
- ✓ coaching or assistant coaching,
- ✓ single day event helpers,

- ✓ drama or music assistance, and
- ✓ over-night trip chaperone.

B. INDIRECT CONDUCT OR SUPERVISION → Those volunteers that are involved in opportunities that do not involve interactions with students are encouraged to read and understand SJL's volunteer policies and guidelines, but are not required to formally apply, consent to background checks, or acknowledge understanding and compliance.

Examples of indirect supervision include but are not limited to:

- ✓ concession stand worker,
- ✓ ticket takers,
- ✓ adult hospitality,
- ✓ assembling of bulletins, and
- ✓ baking treats for holiday parties.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

SJL does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of our educational policies, employment practices, admissions policies, scholarship, and loan programs, athletic and other school or church administrated programs.

"Students are a gift from the Lord." - Psalm 127:3b



POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

UNDERSTANDING CHILD ABUSE

- A. What is child (student) abuse?
- ✓ Child abuse is a legal classification describing various maltreatments of children.
- B. What are some facts about child abuse?
- ✓ In about 80% of cases of child abuse, the perpetrator is an adult known to the child.
 - ✓ There are registered sex offenders in Plymouth and the surrounding area.
 - ✓ Most abuse takes place within a context of an ongoing relationship.
 - ✓ Child abusers are often married and have their own children.
 - ✓ Many of the reported cases of child molestation are committed by adolescent males.
- C. Why are students at school or church potentially vulnerable?
- ✓ It is a community of trust.
 - ✓ There is often an ignorance of the facts.
 - ✓ Safeguards may be ignored.
 - ✓ There are an unlimited number of opportunities to be in contact with students.
 - ✓ There is easy access to students.
 - ✓ There is a constant need for adult workers.
 - ✓ Turnover among volunteer workers is high.
- D. What is the impact of child sexual abuse?
- ✓ Victimization of a child.
 - ✓ Shattered trust.
 - ✓ Damaged families.
 - ✓ Psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage to victim and their families.
 - ✓ Spiritual and reputational damage to the school and/or church community.
 - ✓ School and/or church disunity and polarization.
 - ✓ Litigation and financial other financial costs.
- E. What are some terms related to child abuse in a school or church setting?
- ✓ **Child (Student)** - anyone 19 years or less involved in a program of SJL.
 - ✓ **Situational Abuser** - an opportunist who engages in misconduct when a situation develops or exists that makes abuse possible.
 - ✓ **Preferential Abuser** - a perpetrator who actively seeks out students, intentionally develops a situation, and grooms his or her victims.
 - ✓ **Victim Advocate** - a Christian adult who "stands with" a victim throughout the process while expressing Christian love and concern.
- F. What are the types of child abuse?
- ✓ **Child Sexual Abuse** - Any form of sexual activity with a minor, whether in the home or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, adolescent, or any minor usually at least four years older than the victim.
 - ✓ **Types of child sexual abuse involving touching**
 - fondling or inappropriate touching
 - oral, genital, and anal penetration
 - intercourse
 - forcible rape

- ✓ **Types of child sexual abuse not involving touching**
 - verbal comments and jokes with sexual innuendo
 - pornographic material, pictures, or videos
 - obscene phone calls or texts
 - exhibitionism including allowing or forcing children to watch sex acts between others
- ✓ **Physical Child Abuse** – violent, non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes but is not limited to striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries can include bruises, fractures, cuts, burns, and even death.
- ✓ **Emotional Child Abuse** – a pattern of crushing a child’s spirit by attacking his or her self-worth through sarcasm, rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling. Emotional abuse affects a child’s emotional development leading to low self-esteem, problems with feelings and emotions, and difficulty with relationships.
- ✓ **Child Neglect** – Includes failure by a caregiver to provide for a child’s emotional needs such as love and attention; physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and health care; and failure to offer supervision when it is within his or her power and obligation to do so.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” - Proverbs 31:8a

SJL VOLUNTEER POLICIES

CHILD ABUSE TOLERANCE

SJL has a zero tolerance for abuse in church or school programs and activities. It is the responsibility of every volunteer at SJL to act in the best interest of each student in every program.

In the event that volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspects abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is his or her responsibility to immediately report the information to an immediate supervisor, a pastor, or the principal.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

SJL is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for students and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and must be reported in accordance with this policy and state law, to the senior pastor, principal, or their designee. The administrator to whom the incident is reported will ensure that law enforcement, Child Protective Services, and/or other appropriate agencies.

IF A CHILD IS IN DANGER OR IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE, YOU SHALL CALL 911 AND PROVIDE DETAILS TO THE EMERGENCY DISPATCHER BEFORE NOTIFY A PROPER MINISTRY OFFICIAL. THE SAFETY OF THE CHILD MUST COME FIRST.

SJL supports and encourages a culture of communication related to abuse or suspected abuse of students. If you see or suspect inappropriate interaction with or between students, it is your responsibility to report the inappropriate interaction to a supervisor, a pastor, or the principal. This includes partial or inconclusive information concerning behavior, which may or may not be blameless. If necessary, take immediate action to protect the safety of everyone involved.

Because many sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a student for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report ‘grooming’ behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor, a pastor, or the principal.

It should also be noted that volunteers have the same basic obligations outlined in this handbook towards the treatment of their adult colleagues. If you see or hear something, report it.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Employees who supervise volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all SJL policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from positions for both volunteers and employees. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the senior pastor and/or the Congregational Board of Directors.

SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

The following guidelines are some **“best practices”** which are **“rules of thumb”** meant to create redundancies that offer an umbrella of protection for both volunteers and students. These “best practices” are really just common-sense rules that apply to a volunteer’s interactions with the students in his or her care. It is impossible to foresee every situation, so your best guide will always be your conscience, your instincts, and your common sense.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION & ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

Volunteers should avoid taking students to the restroom. Elementary students may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. However, the student should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon his or her individual capabilities. If a volunteer must go to the restroom to check up on an individual student, they should:

- ✓ Seek out another person to accompany them.
- ✓ If another person is not available, a volunteer should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the student needs assistance.
- ✓ If the student requires assistance, the volunteer should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the student in completing his or her activities while the student remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.
- ✓ Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should only be done in the presence of another adult to help avoid the appearance of impropriety.

INTOXICANTS

Volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in the facility, during a church or school activity, or while working with students at SJL. Volunteers are prohibited from providing alcohol or drugs of any kind to student.

TOBACCO

SJL is a tobacco-free facility. Volunteers are to refrain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility or while on-duty in the presence of students and students or their parents at a church or school event. Volunteers are prohibited from providing tobacco products to students.

NUDITY

Volunteers at SJL should never be nude in the presence of students in his or her care.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

SJL recognizes that meeting the educational needs of students may occasionally require that volunteers interact with students on an individual basis. Volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.

Volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present or where interactions can be easily observed. There will be no one-to-one meetings between a volunteer and a student behind closed doors. If a circumstance arises where a private one-to-one meeting does occur, the volunteer will notify a supervisor, a pastor, or the principal immediately after the meeting.

A volunteer should never allow himself, herself, or another adult to be alone with a minor. If the situation arises (e.g. a minor approaches you at the end of a class or activity) take whatever steps are necessary to move the discussion to a public or common area (hallway, cafeteria, etc.) If moving to a public area is not reasonable, doors must remain open. There is safety in numbers. Keep the duration of such situations to a minimum (seconds not minutes).

PHYSICAL CONTACT

SJL is committed to protecting the students in our care. Our ministry has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting our students. Physical contact in any form should not give even the slightest appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of SJL volunteers must foster trust at all times – personal conduct must be above reproach. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in any of our church or school programs.

- Hugging, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff, faculty, or volunteers and students are important for a student's development and are generally suitable in our ministry setting.
- Physical affection should be appropriate to the student's age. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection should be immediately reported.
- Physical contact and affection should only be given when in the presence of other students or adult. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate, or be misinterpreted as such, when more than two individuals are present and the touch is open to observation.
- Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant student. A student's preference not to be touched must be respected.

FIRST AID

First Aid should be administered as gently and respectfully as possible. Always ask for assistance if a student needs to be transported to a different location.

OVER-NIGHT TRIPS & SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain SJL activities may occasionally require overnight sleeping arrangements be made involving students. In the event that an activity requires sleeping arrangements, volunteers will strictly observe the following rules. Any exceptions must be approved in advance by the senior pastor or principal.

- Volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual room checks to ensure that students remain in designated sleeping areas.
- Only students of the same birth gender will be permitted to sleep in the same room.

- At times, a volunteer or other appropriate adult will sleep in the same room as students or in an adjoining room. However, volunteers are prohibited from sleeping in a 1:1 ratio setting with students for any reason, unless the volunteer is an immediate family member of the student.
- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each person will use single-occupant sleeping bags or blankets.
- In these instances of non-standard beds, volunteers will be required to wear both top and bottom clothing while sleeping.
- All participants must have a medical consent form and other necessary paperwork on file with SJL before participation.

TRANSPORTATION

Volunteers should not transport students to or from off-campus programs or activities in their personal vehicle. Exception may be granted by the principal when a parent or legal guardian provides advanced written permission for his or her child to be transported in a private vehicle. Any volunteer receiving permission to transport another parent's child, must have the proper information on file with the ministry front office.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students. However, it is expected that from time to time supervising adults may be called upon to address students regarding human sexuality and purity. Volunteers are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any student. This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging, and other means.

POSSESSION OF SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

SJL volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, etc.) on ministry property or in the presence of students. If any such materials are purportedly necessary for classroom instruction, they must be approved in advance by the senior pastor and the principal.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE, PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO, AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

No computers or similar devices owned by SJL are to be used by volunteers or students to engage in chat rooms, instant messaging apps, or visit pornographic or sexually inappropriate websites. Violation of this policy can lead to discipline from the senior pastor or principal. Any questions about what constitutes inappropriate use of an SJL device, or the suitability of a particular website, program, or app should be discussed with the senior pastor or principal in advance.

Volunteers should refrain from taking photographs or videos of and/or exchanging such items with students regardless of the reason or the device used. The use of electronic devices capable of recording audio, video, or photos is prohibited in bathrooms, locker rooms, and similar areas.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between volunteers and students should be positive and uplifting. Volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and free of swearing in the presence of students.

ENFORCEMENT OF OTHER RULES

Volunteers, whenever possible, are encouraged to help paid employees monitor student behavior by watching for inappropriate activity, curbing simple student misbehavior, and/or bringing issues to the attention of a paid employee.

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