



GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH Children and Youth Policy

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (heretofore known as GDLC) takes the care of our children, youth, and staff very seriously and strives to provide a safe and consistent outlet for children and youth to learn about and build a relationship with God. This is done through a multitude of faith stimulating events such as Children’s Church, VBS, volunteering, and youth trips. The safety of all those involved with each event has always been a high priority and the below policies will provide beneficial guidelines to protect both the children and GDLC staff.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to set distinct rules and parameters that will ensure safety of the children and youth in the care of GDLC while protecting GDLC and its assets, staff, and volunteers.

Scope: The policies listed in this manual are in effect any time children and youth are on GDLC property or at any GDLC-sponsored and organized event.

GDLC reserves the right to add to, subtract from, amend, alter, modify, or terminate all or any portion of this policy.

General Requirements for all Youth / Children’s Ministry Workers

- Adults working with Youth must be a minimum of 21 years old
- Ministry Workers must be a minimum of 14 years old to assist in the Nursery
- All Ministry Workers are expected to be living a Christian life
- Ministry workers may be on a volunteer or payroll basis
- All workers, 16 years and older, will go through a standard background check before being allowed to work within the children’s ministry/ youth ministry areas.
- Individuals who do not satisfactorily pass their background check will be excluded from service and/or contact with children or youth. However, they may be offered other volunteer opportunities as appropriate.

General Expectations of Conduct

Supervision:

- GDLC requires a “Two-Adult Rule” – no Ministry Worker shall ever be alone with a minor, whether on GDLC property or off property. When 2 adults are not present, the room door will remain open/ajar or if the door is shut, it must have an unblocked window for visual supervision.
- Ministry Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before scheduled activities to avoid children or youth arriving prior to supervision.
- Ministry Workers, who are minors, must obtain parental permission for participation to volunteer in ministry.
- All Ministry Workers working with children are required to always use appropriate physical contact, including, but not limited to, touching a child’s hand or hugging their side rather than their front. There is no touching of private body areas. Appropriate touching considers the situation and location. For example, a hug may be appropriate in public but not in a private location in the church.

Discipline:

- Ministry Workers will observe the 10-minute rule: If a child is upset and cannot be calmed within 10 minutes, the parent will be notified that their child needs them.
- Ministry Workers may never spank, hit, grab, shake or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in situations where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming themselves or others.
- Discipline problems should be reported to the Ministry Leadership Team immediately.

Injuries or Illness:

- First Aid Kits are available in the Resource Room, Kitchen, and Youth Center.
- Ministry Workers will be encouraged to undergo CPR/First Aid training. These may be provided periodically at church.
- Ministry Workers and/or students who are ill with fever or communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch will not be permitted to participate in ministry activities.
- Students should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If they cannot be immediately returned, care should be taken to isolate them in a monitored way.
- First aid will be administered for minor injuries. Parents/guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the student.
- Injuries requiring more than simple first aid, and potentially further medical care, should be given immediate attention, and parents / guardians notified immediately. In addition, a Notice of Injury Report should be completed, with one copy given to the parent, and one copy given to leadership.
- **KEEP IN MIND THAT WE ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO DISPENSE ANY OVER THE COUNTER OR PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS.**

Notice of Abuse, Injury or Molestation:

- GDLC has a Zero Tolerance for abuse and is in the best interest of the child and staff to act in the best interest of the vulnerable person in every program.
- GDLC encourages any child or parent with a concern about any of our Ministry Workers to report them to the Children's or Youth Director
- Ministry Workers will immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate, or could lead to injury, to the Director.
- Ministry Workers who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation or of possible abuse or molestation, connected with a ministry activity must immediately inform the Children's or Youth Director.
- In cases of abuse or molestation, or possible abuse or molestation, the Director will work with the Executive Director to ensure proper documentation and legal counsel is received if necessary.
 - Note on "Mandatory Reporters"
In the State of Iowa, there is no mandatory reporting requirement for pastors, church staff, or volunteers. This does NOT mean these reports will be dismissed. Appropriate follow-up will be expected.

Ratios

- The ratio for the Nursery shall not exceed 1:4
- The ratio for Youth Ministry programs shall not exceed 1:10.

Nursery Ministry Workers – Specific Requirements

- All above general requirements and expectations must be met.
- The church nursery is to be staffed at a minimum level with one adult Nursery worker and one other Nursery worker.
- The Nursery is only open during stated hours each week. Parents may not leave children in the nursery unattended at any time.
- Once children are in the supervision of the nursery staff, they must remain with the Nursery staff until they are in the custody of the individual who dropped them off or their parents or legal guardians.

Children’s Program Ministry Workers – Specific Requirements

- All above general requirements and expectations must be met.
- All Staff and Ministry Workers must never be in a one-on-one situation with a child. Care must be taken to work as a team where paid Staff and Ministry Workers can easily be observed by another leader. There are exceptions where a child may be having a conversation with an adult in a classroom. In that case, the classroom door will be open/ajar, or if closed, it must have an unblocked window for visual supervision.
- The Ministry Workers should check to make sure the restroom is safe and then wait outside the restroom or outside the stall if that is deemed to be appropriate. Direct unaccompanied students to the nearest restroom so there is less opportunity to wander.
- Once children are in the supervision of Children’s Ministry, they must remain with the Ministry Workers until they are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

Youth Program Ministry Workers– Specific Requirements

- All above general requirements and expectations must be met.
- All verbal and written communication, including email, social networking, texting, blogs and messaging, as well as other means of developing technological interaction, must always reflect the highest of Christian respect and standards.
- All Staff and Ministry Workers must never be in a one-on-one situation with a child. Care must be taken to work as a team where paid Staff and Ministry Workers can easily be observed by another leader. There are exceptions where a child may be having a conversation with an adult in a classroom. In that case, the classroom door will be open/ajar, or if closed, it must have an unblocked window for visual supervision.

Transportation and Drivers

- Transportation is to be provided only by Authorized Drivers or parents of students attending that event.
- Transportation to church-sponsored activities is to be provided only from the church to the activity and from the activity back to the church. Transportation between the home and church is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to arrange.
- Students are NEVER authorized drivers for any church event.
- Staff and Ministry Workers may NEVER be alone in a vehicle with one child / student unless the parent or guardian is informed and authorized.
- All traffic laws and safety measures must be obeyed (i.e. speed limits, wearing of seat belts, etc.).
- The “two-adult” rule applies in vehicles as well.
- Vehicles should have a common starting point and destination.
- Drivers cannot make side trips or unscheduled stops unless there is an emergency.

Programs Held Off-Property

- Events off the GDLC campus must be approved for inclusion on the church calendar a minimum of two weeks in advance and full information given to parents as to purpose, times, places, costs, and leadership.
- Off-campus events, where needed, will have an Event Permission Form signed by their parent.
- See “Drivers” section for more information regarding transporting children and youth.
- If a child/youth disobeys rules when off-campus, the parents will be notified. If requested, the parents must come and get the child/youth immediately, at the cost of the parent.
- Continual attention must be paid to the location of individual children/youth while away from the GDLC campus. Students may be allowed to participate without direct supervision in groups of two (buddy teams, not boyfriend and girlfriend) or more.
- A by name head count will be conducted after every vehicle stop.

Ministry Events

- If a non-Youth/Children’s Ministry event is taking place, and childcare/nursery is not available, attendees who bring their children must keep them in the same space as the event.
- Unsupervised children outside of the event space create potentially harmful situations to the child as well as liability issues to the church.
- The Ministry Director responsible for the event is tasked with letting attendees know if childcare will be available and/or the child(ren) will be allowed within the event space.

Procedures For Dealing With A Registered Sex Offender

Any person having been placed on a sex offender registry, as the result of a sexual misconduct or molestation offense, will be allowed to attend church services under the following conditions:

- The conditions of their parole allow them to do so.
- They agree to periodic meetings with the Senior Pastor or his/her designee for the purpose of imposing conditions and reviewing compliance with such.
- They agree to be accompanied by an assigned member whenever on GDLC property.
- They are not allowed to use the GDLC restrooms unless accompanied by a staff or assigned member.
- They are not allowed off-premise social interaction with any GDLC child or youth.
- They are not allowed to have GDLC keys/fobs in their possession.
- It is understood they will never be hired as a GDLC employee or work with GDLC children or youth in any way.
- The registered sex offender is to be presented with a written copy of their restrictions, and by their affixed signature, must agree to abide by these conditions. It is also understood that if they violate any of these conditions, their attendance privileges may be revoked.

Violation of Policy

- Ministry Workers must promptly notify the Ministry Team Leader or Executive Director when they or others violate the procedures mandated in this policy.
- Ministry Leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance. In the process of ensuring compliance, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.
- An internal investigation will occur as a result of incidents reported as all nonconforming actions with this policy may result in harm to any individual.
- All workers/volunteers involved with an investigation will be removed from duties pending investigation results.
- All staff and volunteers will cooperate with law enforcement if allegations of injury or abuse are presented.

Response to Allegations

All allegations of incidents involving improper touching, physical abuse, or sexual abuse of a child/youth during the course of any and all GDLC-sponsored activities must be immediately brought to the attention of the Senior Pastor and Executive Director. An exception exists if the alleged perpetrator is within the reporting chain, in which case, that person shall be bypassed and the report will be made to another individual in the reporting chain, and an incident report will be filed.

The informed party will immediately remove any person charged with improper sexual or physical abuse or conduct with a child/youth from contact with all persons below the age of 18. This period of contact restraint will continue until the investigation of the charge has been concluded and the charge has been determined to be without merit. If the charge is determined to be sufficiently serious as to require reporting to governmental authorities, the period of contact restraint will be continued until the authorities have determined that the allegations are without merit.

If an incident is reported, it is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor and/or Executive Director to see that proper notification is made to the following: parents/guardian, legal and social welfare authorities as mandated by state law, and the property/liability insurer (in accordance with the insurance contract).

All allegations of sexual misconduct should be fully investigated and corrective and/or disciplinary action taken as warranted.

GDLC should not attempt to perform a detailed investigation of any alleged incident on its own but should fully cooperate with all legal entities involved.