

SAFE COMMUNITY POLICY – YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Adapted from ChurchWest Insurance Services, and adopted by CGS Church Council, May 2024

MINISTRY PURPOSE

Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is a non-profit religious organization. More importantly, our organization is a community of believers who have joined together to meet the spiritual, emotional, social, and academic needs of the greater community.

At CGS, we are committed to the flourishing of all our members, and we endeavor to follow the call of Christ to serve our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable among us. A part of this call to serve the vulnerable is being entrusted with the spiritual, moral, and educational development of the children and young people of our community. We take this community trust seriously, and always work to ensure the safety of young people in our congregation. This document is an update to our existing Safe Community Policy, which was approved in April 2013—thus continuing this church’s longstanding commitment to our young people.

Sadly, churches have not always been safe places for children. While to our knowledge, CGS specifically has been a safe place for children, we recognize and lament the abuse that too many have experienced in the wider church. This policy is designed to protect children and youth from abuse, to help staff and volunteers recognize the signs of abuse, and to respond to the holy Gospel of Christ. It also puts new policies in place to comply with recent changes to state law.

The standards of behavior outlined in this policy apply to all staff and volunteers. Violations of these standards by employees are regarded as a serious breach of integrity and could result in discipline, up to and including termination. Violations of these standards by volunteers may result in removal from their volunteer position.

CGS understands the responsibility placed upon our church by God, parents, and the entire community who entrust children to our care. Any person known to pose a threat to children or youth will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children or youth.

Employees, regular volunteers, and administrators of **CGS**, must agree to follow the standards of conduct of this ministry to the best of their ability.

DEFINITIONS:

For purposes of this policy, the terms “**child**” or “**children**” or “**youth**” includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Youth Service Organization: CGS has activities that involve the direct supervision of children. Youth Service Organization is defined by the State of California in Business and Professions Code section 18975.

A **regular volunteer** is any volunteer who is 18 years of age or older and who has direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.

An **occasional volunteer** is any volunteer who is 18 years of age or older and who has contact with children and works less than 16 hours per month or less than 32 hours per year.

Employees includes all employees, whether they work with children or not, including seasonal, occasional, and part-time employees.

Administrators include clergy, the community coordinator, and the chair of the personnel committee.

Mandated Reporters: California Penal Code section 11165.7 identifies who are considered mandated reporters.

TRAINING ON CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING

Child abuse and neglect, as defined in CANRA, includes: physical abuse, sexual abuse (including both sexual assault and sexual exploitation), willful cruelty or unjustified punishment, unlawful corporal punishment or injury, and neglect (including both acts and omissions).

An administrator, employee, and regular volunteers of **CGS** shall individually complete training in child abuse & neglect identification and training in child abuse & neglect reporting consistent with Business and Professions Code 18975(a). This California specific training will cover types of abuse & neglect, what the law requires of mandated reporters, how to spot evidence of child abuse, examples of different types of abuse, how to report abuse, what happens after a report is filed, and much more.

Prior to your employment or volunteering at CGS, this training must be completed. This can be completed by:

Free, self-administered training is available at <https://mandatedreporterca.com/> Prior to employment or volunteering with CGS, this must be completed and a certificate must be returned to Community Coordinator.

Employees must complete the General Training (4 hours).

Clergy (those that are ordained, licensed or commissioned) must also complete the additional training specific for clergy.

Volunteers who are not considered to be mandated reporters are required to complete the two-hour training.

Employees will be paid for this training.

ADMINISTRATORS, EMPLOYEES AND REGULAR VOLUNTEERS – BACKGROUND CHECKS

All Administrators, employees and regular volunteers must undergo a background check as set forth in Business and Professions Code section 18975 and Penal Code section 11105.3 to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse.

SCREENING PROCEDURES

All employees, administrators, regular volunteers and occasional volunteers who work with those under the age of 18 participating in our programs and activities will be screened.

1. Prior to consideration, all prospective volunteers interested in a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return an initial ministry application.
2. The Pastor, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The Community Coordinator also will permanently store all application materials—the application form, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.
3. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the Pastor, or designee, will check at least two references to

confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application.

4. A Criminal Background Check Guidelines: Pursuant to Section [11105.3 of the Penal Code](#), all employees, administrators, and regular volunteers shall undergo a background check to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse or other convictions that have been determined by the FBI that would preclude them from working with youth.

Before a background check is conducted, all employees, administrators and regular volunteers will be asked to complete sign an authorization form allowing CGS to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the authorized Custodian of Records based on guidance provided by the FBI. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. Pursuant to privacy laws, the result of the background check will not be disclosed to any applicant. However, you may contact the FBI directly for your records [here](#).

The background check authorization form and results will be permanently maintained in confidence on file at CGS.

5. After the Pastor, or designee, contacts references and a background check has been completed, he or she will conduct an interview with the candidate.
6. When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The same procedures set forth in “Screening Procedures” above also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered. *(applicable state and/or local law may regulate at which time during the hiring process and to what extent an employee may ask about an employment applicant’s criminal history)*
2. When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

WAITING PERIOD

All volunteer candidates must be regularly involved in our organization for six months or more before they will be considered for any volunteer ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

SUPERVISION:

Two Adult Rule: To the greatest extent possible, the presence of two unrelated mandated reporters when ministry activities involve contact with, or supervising, children. California does not consider volunteers to be mandated reporters.

One-to-One Mentoring of Youth: CGS may provide one-to-one mentoring of youth. Only with respect to one-to-one mentoring activities, the “Two Adult Rule” set forth in the paragraph above does not apply. Under usual circumstances, staff and volunteers do not provide one-to-one mentoring. In special circumstances, staff or volunteers

may consult with the pastor and community coordinator if they believe one-to-one mentoring is warranted. To be eligible to participate in one-to-one mentoring:

- a) Staff and volunteers must undergo the volunteer screening procedures set forth in paragraph "Occasional Volunteer Screening"
- b) Staff, volunteers, parents or guardians of youth participating in one-to-one mentoring must undergo the training set forth in paragraph "Administrators, Employees and Regular Volunteers - Background Checks"
- c) Pastor shall have contact with volunteers and parents or guardians of youth participating in one-to-one mentoring both before and after any mentoring session.

Any one-on-one mentoring of youth must take place in a location where the adult worker and the youth are both visible to others who are present. Any planned one-on-one meetings must be approved by the pastor and community coordinator, and the adult worker must obtain prior written approval from parents/guardians.

Appropriate Behavior with Children: Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or embracing others, etc.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room unless for experiencing an emergency or emergency drill with procedures that dictate otherwise.

RESTROOM GUIDELINES

Children should utilize the classroom bathroom. A worker should escort the child or children to the bathroom. They should bring groups of children when possible. Workers should check the bathroom and stalls first to make sure that they are empty, then allow the children inside. Workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

1. They must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.
2. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.

ACCIDENTAL INJURIES TO CHILDREN

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the Pastor or Community Coordinator. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

TEENAGE WORKERS

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 14
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above (with the exception of a background check, which can't be conducted on minors).
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of two mandated reporters and must never be left alone with children.

(Using only underage workers does not meet the requirements of Business and Professions Code section 18975)

INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
3. Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
4. Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
5. Ministry coordinators and supervisors who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.
6. Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person.
7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

MEDICATIONS POLICY

It is the policy of CGS not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with Pastor to develop a plan of action.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is the policy of CGS not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with Pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify the Pastor or Community Coordinator when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
2. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and 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 with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

REPORTING ABUSE

Mandated reporters must report to a county child welfare department, child protective services or to local law enforcement (police or sheriff's department) immediately by phone. A written report must then be sent within 36 hours by fax or electronically (if available). Written reports must be submitted on the California Suspected Child Abuse Form 8572. This form can be found here:

https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss_8572.pdf

More information on mandated reporting can be found here:

<https://mandatedreporterca.com/about/faq>

If child abuse is suspected, administrators, employees and regular volunteers or one-to-one mentoring volunteers must also report the incident to the ministry board and

chief stewardship officer so that CGS may ensure that the incident is reported to persons or entities outside of CGS including the reporting required by section 11165.9 of the Penal Code.

INVESTIGATIONS

1. This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse or neglect a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated first through civil authorities, then by ministry leaders following a consultation with qualified legal counsel. The ministry will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
4. This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from all activities related to the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, we also will consult with legal counsel.

DEALING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT, NEWS MEDIA

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers of **CGS** will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating abuse and neglect.
2. The leadership of this ministry will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization and a report will be provided to our insurance carrier. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.
3. One individual—a member of the leadership team, an employee, or our attorney will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to

avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.