

Congregational Guidelines for

Dealing with Sexual Offenders

CONGREGATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Booklet may be downloaded on the WELS Connect Web site at
<http://connect.wels.net/special-ministries>.

CONGREGATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SEXUAL OFFENDERS

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Introduction

- Did you know that Sussex, Wis., population 8,828, has eight sexual offenders, of which one was for sexual battery?*
- Did you know that Pewaukee, Wis., population 12,494, has 28 sexual offenders in its area?
- Did you know that Midland County, Mich., population 82,600, has 162 registered sex offenders?
- Did you know that the average urban church has a dozen convicted sexual offenders within a one-mile radius of the church?
- Did you know that one in ten churches has a convicted sexual offender within its membership and that fact is often unknown to the pastor and church leadership?
- Do you know the number of sexual offenders in your community? Do you know if there are any convicted sexual offenders among your congregation's members or those associated with your church in any way?

The guidelines presented here will not give you those statistics. Those are readily available on Web sites such as www.familywatchdog.us.

Congregations need to consider three major components to assure that theirs is a safe space for children, youth, and vulnerable adults. They are:

* All statistics taken as of 12/2011.

This material has been gathered from various sources with permission granted to reprint. Much of it was gleaned from "Balancing Acts – Keeping Children Safe in Congregations," prepared by Rev. D. W. Haffner.

- Policies and procedures developed and implemented for keeping children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe from sexual abuse.
- Policies and procedures developed and implemented for responding to a person who has been convicted or accused of sexual offenses against children, youth, or adults.
- Policies and procedures developed and implemented for educating adults, youth, and children in the congregation about child sexual abuse and prevention.

These guidelines are based on the following principles:

- We have a responsibility to assure that children and youth will be safe in our congregations from sexual abuse, sexual assault and harassment, even or perhaps especially when we do not know if there is an offender in our congregation. Indeed, we have a responsibility to see that our congregations are free of sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation for all our members—children, youth, and adults—as well as visitors and staff.
- While we are called to reach out with the gospel to all, and to offer a congregational home to all who share our Christian faith and fellowship, we realize that in the case of an individual with a history of sexual offenses there must be limitations to congregational involvement. That commitment means that only in rare cases will a person be denied access to ministry and fellowship.
- We also have a responsibility to educate ourselves about child sexual abuse and healthy childhood sexuality, to be well informed about sexual offenses and offenders, and to develop policies that will help us make good decisions about the actions that we are called to take.

What Does Scripture Say?

Forgiveness is free and full. Trust is earned.

What horror, uncertainty and fear fill our hearts anytime we think that on Judgment Day Jesus will remember that time in the park; that day of vacation; those words we spoke; the thoughts we've managed to keep hidden in our hearts. Because we remember the sins of our youth, recall our evil ways and wicked deeds, and continue to confront the sins of our old age, the waves of guilt still wash over us—until someone reminds us:

[The LORD] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:10-12).

The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:12).

Jesus' forgiveness is full and free. No conditions have to be met. No record has been kept. That good news which brings peace to our accusing hearts and silences the accusing tongues of fellow Christians is the good news we will speak to the troubled registered sexual offender. The offender knows that at any time of any day any human being with a computer and internet access will be able to see and speak about sins which are no longer in the sight or memory of his heavenly Father.

Trust will need to be earned—but this is not trust that a sexual sinner’s repentance is sincere. We hear the confession and we will proclaim God’s free and full forgiveness in Christ. We do that squelching thoughts that the repentance may not be genuine and that we may be fooled. The trust which needs to be earned is trust in the capacity of that sinner to consistently say no to the particular sin which, because of the law of the land, is following him through a long period of his life. That will come over time, but it will be no easy task in a sexually obsessed society and culture like ours.

(Quoted from “Registered Sexual Offenders in the Congregation,” Pastor John Seifert, pages 7-8.)

Background Information

Many people believe that the greatest threats to children or vulnerable adults are known sex offenders or strangers. **Research indicates that, in the vast majority of cases of child sexual abuse, the abuser is an adult that the child knows and trusts.** They are parents, step parents, grandparents, other relatives, babysitters, teachers, coaches, and yes, clergy and religious educators. More than eight in ten sexual abusers are never reported. No policy dealing with a convicted sex offender will assure that all children, youth, and vulnerable adults in your congregation are safe.

Many people believe that all sex offenders will re-offend regardless of treatment or other factors that suggest otherwise. Sex offenders can resume healthy lives in the community, including not committing other offenses, if they have completed treatment and if they have a commitment to never abusing another child. In a comprehensive review of more than 61 studies, all treated sex offenders had a re-offense rate for another sexual crime of less than 13 percent.

Many people believe that sexual abuse happens to other people. A significant minority of adults have survived histories of child sexual abuse, and, child sexual abuse occurs in all types of families, without regard to religion, ethnicity, or economic status.

Policies a Congregation Should Consider

To Keep Our Children and Youth Safe

- a. Designate the responsibility for these issues to the Board of Elders (referred to as BoE) or appoint a special committee. Provide them with support to maintain their knowledge and skill strengths. Have opportunities for them to regularly inform the congregation of their role. The responsibilities of this committee might include the following:
 - Become knowledgeable about community resources for child abuse, treatment for sex offenders, and support groups for survivors.
 - Know about state laws regarding the reporting of sexual and physical abuse.
 - Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
 - Evaluate applications for volunteers that are questioned as needing more information or follow up.
 - Facilitate training for staff and volunteers on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse.
 - Meet with sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in church activities.
 - Receive allegations of possible abuse and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations.
- b. Create and implement a written policy on safe congregations. Share it with the congregation. Train appropriate staff and leaders in its application. Review and update it as needed.
- c. Make sure the pastor, the teachers, and the church and

- school leadership know the state laws for reporting concerns about child abuse. Implement annual training for all volunteers in the congregation on how to recognize possible signs of physical and sexual abuse and subsequent actions to take.
- d. Consider including a session on sexual and physical abuse at the appropriate grade level in the educational agencies of the church.
 - e. Adopt and use a screening form for all employees, regardless of position, and all volunteers who work with children and youth. The form should ask directly about histories of sexual offenses. (See samples in Attachment #2.)
 - f. Conduct background checks on all employees and volunteers. (If this is done for all, there can never be a question that we are singling out a person when we do a background check on a person because of concerns we might have. See sample in Attachment #3.)
 - g. Develop and implement a policy that requires two adults be present in each class or program for children and youth as well as in cars transporting young people to activities.
 - See sample “Code of Ethics” and “Risk Management” (Attachment #4).
 - See “General Policies for Youth Leaders And All Ministries for the Prevention of Abuse” (Attachment #5).
 - h. Create and distribute a referral list of community organizations and therapists who specialize in sex abuse prevention and treatment in cases where such referrals are necessary and appropriate (see Attachment #6).
 - i. Offer support groups and/or counseling for those who have survived child sexual abuse.

To Educate the Adults in the Congregation

- a. Offer a topical Bible class periodically (especially if the congregation has a changing membership).
- b. Include occasional newsletter articles dealing with sexual abuse and sexual offenders.
- c. Open a discussion in congregational meetings—the BoE could make this a part of their regular report at congregational meetings.
- d. Programs for parents on talking about sexuality.
 - Programs for parents on talking with their children about sexuality, including how to keep their children safe from abuse, can be offered by the congregation, and are especially important if they are not offered elsewhere in the general community. Parents need support in providing their children with healthy messages about sexuality that are age-appropriate. They also need to be able to recognize the signs of possible child sexual abuse.
 - Parents need to know that (1) while sex play between children of similar ages is often healthy curiosity, sex play between children more than three years apart in age is most often problematic, (2) it is expected for children to play doctor or “you show me yours, I’ll show you mine,” but that any type of penetration, whether with fingers, objects, or penises, is not typical but a sign to be concerned, and (3) it is important to screen childcare workers and babysitters for histories of sex offenses and to ask that day care and nursery school caregivers, coaches, youth leaders, after school workers, etc. be screened by the sponsoring agency (From “Balancing Acts – Keeping Children Safe in Congregations”).

Guidelines for Involving Sex Offenders

Introduction

It is important that our congregations develop policies and procedures to use when a person who is a known pedophile or a sex offender wants to be part of the congregation or an existing member is accused of a sexual offense. It is best to think through these policies and procedures in advance of facing a crisis. Given the prevalence of child sexual abuse, it is especially important to try to be prepared in advance.

According to the federal Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM), “the criminal justice system manages most convicted sex offenders with some combination of incarceration, community supervision, and specialized treatment . . . the majority are released at some point on probation or parole (either following sentencing or after a period of incarceration in prison or jail). About 60 percent of offenders managed by the U.S. correctional system are under some form of conditional supervision in the community” (CSOM Recidivism of Sex Offenders, CSOM Documents, May 2001. See www.csom.org for more information). And many of them want to attend worship and participate in the life of a congregation. In fact, attendance and membership in a local congregation may be encouraged by their treatment provider and parole supervisor, often to cut down on their social isolation.

There are those who believe that a convicted sex offender never belongs in one of our congregations. We are offering information and guidance for those congregations wishing to consider including a person with a history (or an accusation) of sexual abuse. We also are including a sample Limited Access Agreement (see Attachment #1).

There are congregations that have successfully integrated a convicted sex offender into the congregation (with limitations), and carried out their commitment to share the gospel with all people, even those that have committed morally repugnant acts. Each congregation

faced with this situation will make its own decision about what is right given the particular facts and circumstances.

Various studies suggest that, depending on the nature of the offense and assuming successful completion of treatment, most treated sex offenders do not recidivate. As Christian congregations, we can provide compassion, support, and reconciliation to those who truly have indicated that they have changed and have taken responsibility for their actions. As those who have sexually offended return to or join our church we can provide support and compassion with awareness and vigilance so that all are safe.

However, the sex offender needs more to assure that his/her involvement doesn't pose risks to the congregation and that standards are in place for protection against false allegations and suspicions. In order to do so safely, we must assure that the convicted sex offender does not have the opportunity in our congregations to re-offend. This includes avoiding situations where they can be accused falsely. The fact is that a person with a history of sex offense against children should never be allowed to be with children, work with children and youth, or socialize with children in the congregation. **No person who has been convicted of, or with an unresolved accusation of, any sexual misconduct can be permitted to be involved in any children's religious education or youth group activity.**

The response of the congregation to a convicted or accused sex offender is a **Limited Access Agreement** (see Attachment #1). This agreement invites the person with a history of sex offenses to participate in certain aspects of congregational life, setting clear boundaries including what the individual will not do. Typically a Limited Access Agreement will specify participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all-adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events as acceptable. It asks the person to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes not talking with children, volunteering at or chaperoning children's events, including children's religious education classes,

talks with children during worship, and children's activities during intergenerational events. It generally requires the person to remain in the presence of an adult who knows their situation at all times when children are present, including in some cases asking the person to suggest a group of people to act as companions at church events where children may be present. It denies the person access to keys to the building and asks them to avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group. The sample Limited Access Agreement can be modified based on the feedback of the committee and the individual circumstances of the offender. There are two sample documents, one for a person accused of a sexual offense and another for a person convicted of a sexual offense.

The message to the sex offenders should be that they are welcome to participate in adult worship, adult social, and adult educational activities but that they must make an agreement with the congregation to avoid all contact with children. If inappropriate behavior continues, the offending individual may be asked to leave the congregation for a period of time, with reasons for suspension and conditions of return made clear. Individuals are generally not excluded from the congregation completely except by agreement of the BoE and the pastor, who will communicate the decision.

What Do We Do? We Have a Sex Offender in the Congregation

In some cases, people reveal their backgrounds to the pastor. In other circumstances, another congregation member may discover the person's history of sexual offenses. Congregation members should know that in these cases they should make their concern known to the pastor. In other cases, someone may see a familiar name on the sex offender registry. Or, perhaps it becomes known that a long-standing member of the congregation has been accused of a sexual offense.

Steps to Take

1. No matter how the situation is revealed, as quickly as possible the pastor should meet privately with the individual to discuss the concerns that have been raised. The pastor may want to check the local sex offender registry before meeting with the person. (If the pastor is the one being accused, these steps do not apply. Instead, the chairman of the BoE should be contacted immediately and he should contact the circuit pastor and the district president.) If the person is a member of the congregation and has a spouse who also attends the church, the pastor should reach out to the spouse as well.
2. If the pastor determines that there is genuine cause for the concern, the person should then be asked to meet with the BoE or the specially appointed committee. Depending on how the pastor learns of the sexual misconduct he may be required to report this to the authorities if it has not already been done. See www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/clergymandated.pdf
3. The individual should be asked to sign a release form so that the pastor can contact his/her sex offender treatment provider and/or current therapist. If the counselors you are contacting are not of our fellowship, you may want to discuss the matter with one of the counselors at WLCFS-Christian Family Solutions. They can help you ask the right questions of the offender's treatment provider. The therapist and, if applicable, the parole officer should be asked for their professional assessment of the likelihood that the sex offender will re-offend. Seek their advice as to whether additional restrictions beyond the standard Limited Access Agreement ought to be placed on the person's participation.

It will be helpful to know the number, timing and nature of offenses. Such information allows consideration of different situations. For example, an 18-year-old male who had con-

sensual sex with his 16-year-old girlfriend and against whom her parents pressed charges is a different situation than the person who has served time in jail for sex offenses against neighborhood children. In the second scenario, if the person has been in the community for some time and has previously completed mandated treatment, the committee would be wise to ask the person to go for a professional assessment with a therapist who specializes in working with sex offenders. (Again, Christian Family Solutions can provide valuable guidance for the congregation). The congregation may choose to provide the funding for this assessment. If the offender refuses permission to contact the therapist or refuses to go for an assessment, the congregation would be right to refuse participation in any congregation activity. It is beyond the scope and experience of congregations to assess the risk or probability that a sex offender will re-offend.

The question the BoE must be able to answer is this: given what professionals have advised you, will this person sign and follow a Limited Access Agreement that the offender can maintain with the leadership in order to assure the safety of children and youth?

4. If the assessment indicates that the person has completed or is participating successfully in treatment and is not at high risk for recidivism, the BoE may choose to develop a Limited Access Agreement. If the professional assessment indicates that the person is at high risk for re-offending, it is appropriate to deny that person involvement in the faith community until treatment is successful at reducing the risk. It is important to point out that a person with a commitment to avoiding future abuses will welcome the opportunity for controls on their behaviors.
5. All persons with past histories of sexual offenses should be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement. Upon entry into

the congregation and depending on the circumstances, the person may be asked to sign one annually. If the offender refuses to do so, it is then appropriate to deny the person access to congregation functions and church property.

Offenders who refuse to sign a Limited Access Agreement should know that if they enter the congregation or its property, they will be asked to leave by a member of the BoE. If the individual refuses, the local police may be called for assistance.

6. The BoE should meet at least quarterly with any individual with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns. If there is a pastoral or leadership change in the congregation it is important that the departing person inform the new person of this situation to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation. In sharing information appropriately, it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved. Copies of files including, Limited Access Agreement information, should be treated with care and kept in a secure file drawer. If and when legal questions arise, the pastor in conjunction with the BoE should contact a lawyer who can provide information and advice concerning the local and state statutes that apply.
7. Decide who needs to know. One of the very important and difficult questions is who needs to know that a congregation member has a history of sex offense. Clearly, key people, including the pastor and the BoE, need to know that the person is attending church, that he or she has agreed not to have contact with children, has signed a Limited Access Agreement or check list, and that he or she should never be alone with children and adolescents. Any concerns by a congregation member should be handled privately and confidentially.

Why Would We Exclude Someone from All Congregational Activities?

- The individual refuses to allow the pastor (or the BoE) to contact the treatment provider and/or parole officer.
- The individual refuses to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- The treatment provider reports that the individual is at too high a risk for recidivism.
- The individual refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- The individual refuses to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

Once an individual decides that he/she can comply with these conditions, the process would begin again to reassess the individual and see if he/she could be welcomed back into congregational life.

ATTACHMENT #1 – SAMPLE LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENTS

Example #1

LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT – CONFIDENTIAL**Introductory paragraph in cases of an allegation of sexual abuse:**

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Board of Elders (BoE). While this complaint is being investigated, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement in order to protect both you and the children and youth of our congregation. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the pastor and the BoE. It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Introductory paragraph in cases of a convicted sex offender:

(Name of congregation) is a Christian congregation committed to being open to those who are in need of worshiping with us and sharing our Christian faith, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Please do not talk with children.
- Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- Please remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when children are present.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care. Those people are:

Name	Position
------	----------

Name	Position
------	----------

Name	Position
------	----------

Name	Position
------	----------

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain in effect for an indefinite period.

Signed - Sexual offender

Date

Signed - Witness

Date

Signed - Pastor

Date

Signed - BoE chair

Date

Example #2

LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT – CHECKLIST FORMAT

Introductory paragraph in cases of an allegation of sexual abuse:

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the Board of Elders (BoE). While this complaint is being investigated, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement in order to protect both you and the children and youth of our congregation. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the pastor and the BoE. It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Introductory paragraph in cases of a convicted sex offender:

(Name of congregation) is a Christian congregation committed to being open to those who are in need of worshiping with us and sharing our Christian faith, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

You understand that you will not be allowed to volunteer or chaperone events for children and adolescents, including children's religious classes, talks with children/adolescents during worship, youth group, children's and adolescents' activities during intergenerational events, and driving children and young people.

Name Position

Name Position

Name Position

Name Position

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed every six months and will remain in effect for an indefinite period.

Signed - Sexual offender Date

Signed - Witness Date

Signed - Pastor Date

Signed - BoE chair Date

ATTACHMENT #2 – SAMPLE FORM FOR SCREENING VOLUNTEERS
 Example #1

(Name) LUTHERAN CHURCH - CONFIDENTIAL

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form. Persons seeking a position in the church as a paid employee will be required to complete an employment application in addition to this screening form. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. Only the Elder of Education and the Senior Pastor will know the information provided in this form and as a result of this form.

PERSONAL

Date: _____

Name: _____

Last

First

Middle

Identity must be confirmed with a state driver's license or other photographic identification.

Present address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell: _____

Please indicate the type of youth or children's work you prefer: ____

Please indicate the date you would be available to begin: _____

What is the minimum length of commitment you can make? _____

Have you ever been convicted of, pleaded no contest, or guilty to a crime? ____Yes ____No

If yes, please explain (attach a separate page, if necessary): _____

Do you have a current driver's license? ___Yes ___No

If yes, please list your driver's license number:

If you will be using your personal vehicle for church purposes you will be asked to provide the church with a certificate of insurance.

CHURCH HISTORY AND PRIOR YOUTH WORK

Name of church of which you are a member: _____

List the names and addresses of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years: _____

List all previous church work involving youth (list each church's name and address, type of work performed, and dates): _____

List any training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children or youth work: _____

Personal References (not former employers or relatives)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children or youth. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by *(name)* Lutheran Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information.

I *(check one)* waive do not waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of *(name)* Lutheran Church, and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

I further state that I **HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT.** This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK AND AUTHORIZATION

I hereby authorize the (*name*) Police Department, the (*state*) Department of Public Safety, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation or any other reporting agency, to release any information which pertains to any criminal record contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release said Police Department or reporting agencies from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature

Print name

Print maiden name if applicable

Print all aliases

Date of birth

Place of birth

Social Security Number

Today's date

Record sent to

Name: _____

Address: _____

CONGREGATION HISTORY AND PRIOR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

List congregations you have attended during the past five years.

Name of congregation: _____

City

State

Dates attended: _____

List all previous work involving children and youth (list name, type of work performed, person you were responsible to): _____

Please list two references who are not relatives who have known you for at least three years and who are familiar with your character as it pertains to your experience with children or youth:

1) Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Relationship to you: _____

2) Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Relationship to you: _____

I authorize the congregation to contact references and other congregations to obtain information about my background regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth. I authorize references to provide such information about me. I hereby release and hold harmless from liability any person or organization that

provides information. I also agree to hold harmless this congregation, its trustees, employees and volunteers.

Further, I understand that a member of the staff may check the sex offender registry and/or contact the local police for more information about my background.

This information will be available only to those responsible for screening staff or volunteers or as required by law.

I attest that the above information is true and correct.

Signature

Date

ATTACHMENT #3 – SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Complete form can be found online for download at <https://connect.wels.net/special-ministries>

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

INSTRUCTIONS: *Please print or type all information.* The application must be filled out accurately and completely. Answer all questions. Do not leave an item blank. If an item does not apply, write N/A (not applicable). If you need additional space to answer a question fully, you may use full sheets of paper that are the same size as this page.

It is the policy of (*insert your group's name*) to consider all applicants for employment without regard to age, race, color, handicap (disability), marital status, national origin, ancestry, military reserve status or any other unlawful basis.

PERSONAL	Social Security No. _____
NAME _____ (<i>please print</i>) Last First Middle Initial	
ADDRESS _____ Street City State Zip	
HOME PHONE _____	ALTERNATE NUMBER _____
Position or type of employment desired _____	
Available to: <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer	
Date Available _____	
Are you under 18 years of age? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, indicate date of birth _____	
Have you the legal right to work in the U.S.? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Hiring is subject to verification that applicant meets legal age and U.S. work permit requirements.</i>	
Have you ever been convicted of a crime or are there any criminal charges pending against you? If yes, describe in full the facts involved including dates.* _____ _____	
* A criminal conviction or pending charges will not necessarily bar an applicant from employment.	
I have previously <input type="checkbox"/> Applied for employment at WELS <input type="checkbox"/> Been employed by WELS Dates? _____ <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	

**Complete form can be found online for download at
<https://connect.wels.net/special-ministries>**

AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE DATA

I certify that the facts set forth in this application are true and complete, and I authorize investigation of the statements I have made.

I release from any and all liability all representatives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) for their acts performed in good faith and without malice in connection with evaluating my application, credentials, and qualifications. I also release from any and all liability all individuals and organizations who provide information to WELS in good faith and without malice concerning my employment, competence, ethics, character and other qualifications, including other privileged or confidential information

I understand that my employment at WELS is contingent upon the satisfactory investigation of my work record and references.

A reprographic or facsimile copy of this authorization is as effective as the original.

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

ATTACHMENT #4 – CODE OF ETHICS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Example #1

CODE OF ETHICS FOR ADULTS AND OLDER YOUTH WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of providing a Christian example and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and spiritual support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between youth and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if positive Christian values are to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than the spiritual well-being of our children and youth. Christian adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth and providing models of Christian behavior and values. Children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of this code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read and understand the above statements of position, expectations, and actions.

 Name printed

 Date

 Name signed

Example #2

Church/School Copy

INDIVIDUALS/VOLUNTEERS - RISK MANAGEMENT

And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea (Matthew 18:5-6).

This information is intended to provide all individuals/volunteers with specific guidelines for their conduct (Risk Management) when involved with youth and adult activities authorized and approved in connection with any and all WELS church and/or school activities.

Purpose: In order to provide a safe and secure environment for our ministry participants, and to minimize the ministry workers' vulnerability to unwarranted accusations.

10 Key Elements for the Individual's Code of Conduct

Two-deep leadership – In the event adequate two-deep adult leadership is not available, the following suggestions become significantly more important.

No one-on-one contact – Thus open access is essential. Any one-on-one contact shall be in full view of other youth and adults. Open door policy.

Respect personal privacy – Applies to youth/adult members in situations such as changing clothes and use of toilet facilities. One intrudes only to the extent that health and safety may require.

Separate accommodations – On any outings, such as camping, off church or school property children shall not sleep in a tent of an adult other than his/her own parent or guardian.

No hazing, secret ceremonies or organizations – Christian groups don't need such types of groups. All aspects of the WELS church/school programs are open to observation by parents and volunteers.

Appropriate attire – Proper clothing for activities is required.

Constructive discipline – Discipline used should be constructive and reflect Christian values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

Vigilance – All individuals/volunteers shall be ever observant of conditions and situations that could possibly develop into problems for the youth/adults.

Stay current – On issues that affect you as an individual/volunteer whether specifically related to Christian service or not.

Review – Stay current with WELS policies, procedures and guidelines.

I have read and understand these guidelines:

Signature

Date

GENERAL POLICIES FOR YOUTH LEADERS

For the Prevention of Abuse

Leaders in a child or youth ministry program must continue to be in touch with their own feelings toward the children and youth placed in their care. If the leader feels as if he/she is losing patience with children or doing something rash, that leader must take a break and let others handle the situation for a time. If the leader begins to look at a child or youth inappropriately, the leader should step away from that ministry, especially from the ministry that includes that child or youth. Remember, these children have been placed in our care to nurture, train, and protect. Please consider each one as someone's child and a gift from God.

Leaders should always be aware of the feelings of others, especially the children and youth. If it appears a child or youth is getting a crush on the leader, or if it appears a child is trying to develop a relationship with the leader other than that of a leader and child, then the leader should talk to someone about it to determine how best to proceed. If a leader observes something that makes him/her feel uncomfortable, or if something seems a little strange, trust instincts. The leader should say or do something to address the concern. Leaders should share those feelings or concerns with someone in charge of the ministry so that something can be done.

Be aware of the children's feelings. Not every child understands that some things are said jokingly. Not every child has the same sense of humor. Not every child is raised in the same culture or environment. When speaking to children, leaders should make sure words are understood, and make sure they are not misunderstood. Also, make sure that your actions cannot be misinterpreted as something they were not intended to be. If the leader wants to hug a child or give him/her a pat on the back, make sure those touches are not misinterpreted as being sexual or overly affectionate in nature. The

leader may not mean such contact to be romantic or sexual in nature, but always be aware that the child may interpret them that way.

At present, many experts advise that if someone working with children wants to give a child a hug, a side hug is the best way to do it. Standing side by side, an arm around a shoulder gets the message across to the child that you are proud of him/her without giving a false idea.

Leaders should also be aware of how they dress. Modest dress is always the most appropriate. We want to make sure that the clothes we wear do not give the children or youth any wrong ideas about our motives or attitudes.

Leaders are a role model for children as well as representatives of the church or school, the ministry, and of Jesus. Therefore, in everything we do, the way we speak and act, and by the way we train children, we demonstrate our love for Jesus and what he has done for us.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR ALL MINISTRIES

The following policies have been established by our congregation to help our leaders become more aware of potential abusive situations, and to protect them from allegations of abuse.

BATHROOM POLICIES

Only women will assist children (except for fathers with their own children) when they use the bathroom except in emergency situations.

No teenagers may take children to the bathroom without adult approval.

When assisting K-4 or K-5 children, stand outside and leave the door partially open while the child is using the bathroom. If the child asks for help, before going inside, prop open the bathroom or hallway door. The hall monitor, if applicable, may also be called on to stand near the door.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

We believe that spanking is a legitimate and proper form of discipline if it is administered lovingly and discriminately. We also encourage our parents not to be afraid to use this as a part of their discipline package.

Corporal punishment and physical restraint will not be used in our child and youth ministries, unless there is danger toward the child, other children, or the leader to keep from giving an unclear message to people regarding our concern about physical abuse. If physical restraint is deemed necessary, the leader will ask another leader to assist and a written report will be filed with the parents and those in charge of the ministry.

If the usual disciplinary actions have no effect on a child and extreme measures are called for, the leader will contact the child's parent(s) or guardian, and the parent/guardian will be asked to remove the child from the ministry until the parents, child, and ministry leaders have met to discuss the situation and find a proper resolution to the situation. If such extreme measures need to be taken, a written report will be filed with the parents and with the leaders of the ministry.

Leaders will be expected to use positive methods of discipline to encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. When discipline is necessary, we would encourage the following steps to be used:

1. A verbal reprimand and positive encouragement.
2. A warning with a positive encouragement.
3. Separation of the child from the rest of the children in a "time out" area.
4. Calling of parents to come and remove the child from the ministry if all other forms of discipline fail.

VERBAL DISCIPLINE

Leaders will not be allowed to verbally discipline a child in such a way that will belittle or demean the child. If a verbal confrontation with a child is necessary, the privacy of the child should be considered. In most cases, the confrontation should take place in a hallway or some other semi-public place. In the event that private discipline becomes appropriate, the adult will inform another adult leader of what he/she is doing.

PHYSICAL CONTACT AND TOUCH

Positive physical touch (hugs, pats on the back) can have a very powerful and positive impact on children, and therefore can have a place within our youth ministries.

Because of different cultural, family, developmental, and personal experiences, physical touch can mean different things to different individuals.

What is acceptable to one person can be uncomfortable to another.

Young people, going through puberty and adolescence, can easily misunderstand and misinterpret physical touch.

Children need physical touch to emphasize they are loved.

Therefore, the policy for physical contact will be as follows:

Physical contact and touch of children will be allowed with the following understanding:

1. A leader will never touch a child in his/her genital area, nor allow any touch to go under the child's outer clothing.
2. A leader will take his/her cue from the child as to whether or not the child is comfortable and welcomes even a positive touch from an adult.

3. Leaders will not physically touch children in a private location, but only in a public setting where others can observe the touch.
4. A leader will use extreme caution and discretion when he/she comes into physical contact with children so that the touch does not suggest anything romantic or sexual.
5. At present, many experts advise that if you want to give a child a hug, a side hug is the best way to do it. Standing side by side, an arm around a shoulder gets the message across to the child that you are proud of him/her without giving a false idea.

TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN

When it becomes necessary for leaders to transport children to and from events, the following policies will be followed:

1. The driver must be approved by the leaders of that specific ministry.
2. There will be a seatbelt for each passenger, and each passenger will wear a seatbelt.
3. There should be two adults per vehicle. When this is not possible, the vehicles should travel in groups, or at least in pairs.
4. Medical permission slips for each child will be required and will be carried on the trip by the adult(s) for each vehicle.
5. General discipline procedures will be followed as much as possible. If usual disciplinary actions have no effect and a vehicle must stop to administer discipline, the driver will signal another driver to stop as well. The children in the two vehicles may be rearranged to try to correct the situation. Upon return to the church from the outing, the drivers will file a written report of the incident. If more than two

incidents with the same child occur, the ministry leader(s) will meet with the child's parents/guardian to try to resolve the situation.

6. Upon arrival at the activity location, each child will choose, or will be assigned, another child with whom to be a "buddy." Each set of buddies will check in with group leaders/chaperones at appointed times. Any child without a "buddy" at any time will be required to stay with the leaders/chaperones. Another "buddy" may be assigned at the discretion of the activity leaders.
7. Upon arrival at the activity location, the driver(s) may be asked to help chaperon the children, and will be given directions as to how they are to proceed. This additional area of responsibility will be discussed with the person before he/she volunteers to be a driver.
8. Upon return to church/school, children will be picked up by parent/guardian or a person designated by the parents/guardian. When the ministry leaders deem it necessary and when arranged in advance, the children may be dropped off at home by a driver approved by the leaders.

SPECIFIC POLICIES

Besides the general policies regarding the children's ministries, these specific policies will apply for the following ministries:

Sunday School/Vacation Bible School Program

1. There should be at least two adults (or one adult and one approved teenager) per room during class time. For maximum safety, the two people should not be related.
2. There should be one adult, preferably two, to be hall monitors for the main section of the school area (lower grade classrooms).

3. Parents/guardians will be asked to fill out a registration or consent form for children through grade four. This form will request the names of people (other than parents/guardians) who have been approved to pick up the children from their classes.
4. Children in nursery through fourth grade will not be allowed to leave the classrooms until an approved person comes to get them.
5. Children should be picked up from the classrooms within 10 minutes of the end of class time. If the children are not picked up within that time, they will be taken to the office where they will remain until someone comes to pick them up.
6. Potential teachers, helpers, and volunteers will be asked to complete a volunteer-screening application form before they can teach or serve.

Pioneers – Girls and Boys

1. The leaders will work in pairs when dealing with the groups of children in their care.
2. If discipline needs to be administered, the leaders will follow the policies under the general headings.
3. If any disciplinary action has to be taken, the leaders will make a record of it and discuss this with the child's parents, as well as with the group's leader.

Elementary School

Besides the general policies from this report and the policies that are spelled out in the handbook for the school, the following policies will be observed:

1. The upper grades (4-8) and the younger children (PreK-3) will use separate bathrooms or use the bathrooms at different times if they must share a bathroom.
2. Parents will fill out a registration form that will contain emergency names and phone numbers, as well as a list of people that a child may be released to after school, or in an emergency.
3. An adult and specifically-trained 7th or 8th graders will be designated by the principal to be outside or at the door where he/she can see the parking lot to watch for the safety of the children after school.
4. For the child's safety, children should be picked up by their parent/guardian by (insert time) or no later than (insert time) unless they are involved in extra-curricular activities.
5. All children will have their parent fill out a permission slip and complete an emergency release form before participating in an outside activity such as a field trip.

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR SUSPECTED ABUSE

If a leader suspects that a child may be in danger of being abused or sees questionable adult behavior, the leader is encouraged to privately report these suspicions to the appropriate administrator. Child abusers depend on the ignorance or the apathy of those adults around him/her. It is in the best interests of the child to report those concerns.

If a leader suspects actual abuse, report that instance to the pastor, principal or appropriate administrator. You will be asked to fill out a report form. Your name will be held in confidence and you will not be liable to any lawsuit.

Each report will be taken seriously and will be investigated. In consultation between both the pastor(s) and the principal, a determination of how to proceed will be made. An "in house"

investigation will be made, and people will be interviewed. In accord with state reporting laws the proper authorities will be notified to handle the investigation.

If an accusation is made against a called worker, the district president must be part of the notification process. The WELS Director of Human Resources may be consulted at any time by calling 414-256-3268. Contact with the school's insurance company is recommended in any case where an allegation is made against a called worker, lay worker, or volunteer.

If a case of alleged abuse becomes public knowledge and an official statement is called for, the pastor(s) and/or principal in consultation with the church's Board of Elders and school board will determine the appropriate response.

ATTACHMENT #6 – RESOURCES

These resources are given for information only. No recommendation is intended by listing them here.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence

936 N. 34th Street

Suite 200

Seattle, WA 98103

206-634-1903

An interfaith group of Christians and non-Christians working for the prevention of sexual and domestic violence. While we cannot agree with their mission statement, the site can provide links to statistics and other information that might be helpful.

www.cpsdv.org

ChildHelp USA – National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-4-A Child

Hotline is staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Phone counseling is available. Some statistics available from their site. A secular organization.

www.childhelp.org

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

PO Box 1182

Washington, DC 20013

800-394-3366

This government site connects child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families.

www.childwelfare.gov

STOP IT NOW!!

PO Box 495

Haydenville, MA 01039

413-587-3500

1-888-Prevent (Thursdays – 1-5 pm EST)

An organization whose purpose is to mobilize adults, families and communities to take actions that protect children before they are harmed.

www.stopitnow.org

**Wisconsin Department of Corrections
Office of Victim Services and Programs**

3099 E. Washington Avenue

PO Box 7925

Madison, WI 53707-7925

800-947-5777

608-240-5888

This website provided by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections is a clearinghouse especially for victims of abuse.

www.WIVictimsVoice.org

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA)

123 E. Main Street, 2nd Floor

Madison, WI 53703

608-257-1516 • Voice/TTY

608-257-2150 • Fax

Contact WCASA for more information about sexual violence and for referral to the local sexual assault service provider program (in Wisconsin) nearest you. These local programs can provide victims of sexual violence and their families with information, support and advocacy services.

www.wcasa.org

**Wisconsin Department of Justice
Office of Crime Victim Services**

PO Box 7951

Madison, WI 53707

608-264-9497

800-446-6564

Contact this office for information related to financial assistance to eligible crime victims and funding to support victim assistance to individual victims of crime.

Wisconsin Committee to Prevent Child Abuse

214 N. Hamilton Street

Madison, WI 53703

608-256-3374

Contact this organization for information and resources for parents and communities interested in the prevention of child abuse.

**Wisconsin Department of Corrections
Sex Offender Registry Program (SORP)**

3099 E. Washington Avenue

PO Box 7925

Madison, WI 53707-7925

877-234-0085 (toll free)

Contact SORP for more information regarding the sex offender registry.

INFORMATION ABOUT SEX OFFENDERS

Center for Sex Offender Management

8403 Colesville Road
Suite 720
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-589-9393

The Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM) is a national clearinghouse and technical assistance center that supports state and local jurisdictions in the effective management of sex offenders.

www.csom.org

National Adolescent Perpetration Network Kempe Children's Center

1825 Marion Street
Denver, CO 80218
303-864-5192

This group treats abused children, trains professionals and conducts research in the areas of abuse and violence.

www.kempecenter.org/about.htm

Safer Society Foundation, Inc.

PO Box 340
Brandon, VT 05773
802-247-3132

This group focuses on providing information and resources to help create safer communities through prevention and effective public policy, to provide victims with healing and restitution, and to provide offenders with the tools to be accountable for their actions and to work towards rehabilitation. They believe that sexual offending is a public health issue that must be dealt with.

www.safersociety.org

FOR REFERRAL TO A TREATMENT PROVIDER FOR AN ASSESSMENT

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA)

4900 S.W. Griffith Drive, Suite 274

Beaverton, OR 97005

503-643-1023

This secular group is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence-based practice, public policy and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are at risk to abuse.

www.atsa.com

Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health (SASH)

PO Box 433

Royston, GA 30662

706-356-7031

The Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health (SASH) offers hope and valuable resources to those seeking information about sexual addiction.

www.sash.net

WLCFS Christian Family Solutions

W175 N11120 Stonewood Drive

Germantown, WI 53022

800-438-1772

A WELS counseling service offering counsel and support to victims and their families as well as support for pastors and congregations.

info@wlcfs.org

www.christianfamilysolutions.org

SUPPORT FOR CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network

800-656-HOPE

This group is the largest anti-violence organization. While the group does offer a hotline and counseling services, they are not a Christian group. This site does provide some valuable links for statistics and information.

www.rainn.org

Sexual Assault Recovery Anonymous

PO Box 16

Surrey, BC, V3T 4W4 Canada

410-584-2626

This Canadian group offers a 12-step (non-Christian) program for recovery from sexual assault issues.

www.sexualabusesurvivors.com

Survivors of Incest Anonymous

PO Box 190

Benson, MD 21018-9998

410-893-3322

A 12-step program especially designed for survivors of incest. Groups are set up much like AA groups. Meetings include time for silent prayer and use of the Serenity Prayer.

www.siaawso.org

FOR INSURANCE ISSUES

Church Mutual Insurance Company

3000 Schuster Lane

PO Box 357

Merrill, WI 54452

800-554-2642

Church Mutual offers a variety of materials and forms that can be adapted for congregational use. Their materials can also be valuable to provide information and guidance for the congregation's leadership. Handouts for congregations and congregational leadership are available. See the website for a full listing of materials available.

www.churchmutual.com

OTHER RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

"My Brother's Keeper – What Scripture Says about Child Abuse"

Pastor Michael Lindemann, Lewiston, Minnesota

A paper presented at Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, July 2008. Reprinted with permission.

Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program for a Congregation

Church Mutual Insurance Company

One of the many documents provided for congregations. See their website (www.churchmutal.com) for others. Public domain.

Keeping The Faith: A Call for Collaboration Between the Faith and Child Protection Communities

Victor I. Vieth, Director APRI National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse

A paper presented at Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, July 2008. Reprinted with permission.

Registered Sex Offenders in the Congregation

Pastor John Seifert

A pastoral conference paper presented in Petoskey, Michigan, October 5-6, 2009. Note that the laws referred to were in effect at that time. Reprinted with permission.

Staying Safe

Basic Steps to Keep People as Safe as Possible from Sexual Violence
State of Wisconsin

Public Domain.

